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NOTES

ON THE

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

BY

DR. W. P. MACKAY, M.A.,

of Hull,

AUTHOR OF "GRACE AND TRUTH," "THE SEEKING SAVIOUR," ETC.

CHAS FREELAND JR

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THE SCRIPTURES.

"They are they which testify of ME."—Jesus (in John v. 39).

"He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning HIMSELF."—Jesus (in Luke xxiv. 27).

"To HIM give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."—Peter (in Acts x. 43).

"The testimony of JESUS is the spirit of prophecy."—Servant (Rev. xix. 10).

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of CHRIST, and the glory that should follow."—Spirit (in 1 Peter i. 10).

"The Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of ME."—Jesus (in John xv. 26).

Is there a God?

Can He speak?

Has He spoken?

What has He said?

The *Scripture* is *a whole*, has writers extending over nearly two thousand years, but one connected thought, because one Spirit.

"All Scripture is *theopneust*, or God-breathed." "God Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 1). Its unity proves its Divinity, for no human editor lived the age of the book's production.

The *Scripture* is the account of God in His infinite love telling out what He is, and showing us Him, bringing to Himself men, whom He makes capable of enjoying all that He is. Therefore, since this is all of God, man must be seen *ruined.* Manward, the aspect of the history of the Bible is the history of *sin*: Godward the truth taught all through is that of God putting *sin away.*

We see in the Old Testament—

1. The responsibility of the creature.

In the New Testament—

2. The manifestation of the perfect unexampled grace of God.

Again we find—

1. His Sovereignty as seen in His

great purpose of preparing a Bride for Christ.

2. His way of government in this world—*Israel* the centre of the *nations.*

The Old and New Testaments, therefore, are complementary commentaries on each other. The one prophesies of the other. The two great parts, namely historical and prophetical, are often conjoined, *e.g.*, in the Passover.

Scripture is like *a tree.* Its *root* God—its *centre* Christ—its *sap* the Spirit ramifying to every leaflet. Hence every verse shows its perfection, its wonderful connection, place and bearing on the whole.

Scripture is like a *country*, every road leading to Christ, the metropolis.

It is like a *town.* Hence try to get a bird's-eye view before the details.

It is like a *building.* Every room (book) is to set forth Christ in some fresh character: *e.g.*, *door*, *foundation*, *corner-stone.*

It is like a *rope*, with a silver thread running through it all.

In the Old Testament we find God's ritual

—a form developing a principle. In the New Testament we see a principle, Spirit and truth, originating a form. All is Divine, all is human, like the Incarnate Word. What has God said ?

The Old Testament.

Our Lord's Bible was the Old Testament; in the writings concerning Him it is called "*the Scriptures*" (Luke xxiv. 27; Rom. xv. 4), and also from His own lips, "Search the scriptures" (John v. 39). It is also called "*Moses and the Prophets*" (Luke xvi. 29), and "*the law and the Prophets*" (Acts xxiv. 14). "The law" (Gal. iv. 21). "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in *the* law *of Moses and in the* Prophets *and in the* Psalms concerning Me" (Jesus: Luke xxiv. 44). This latter is the full division according to the Old Testament Hebrew, which was Jesus' Bible and Jesus' divisions.

1. *The Pentateuch*, or the law of Moses = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

2. *The Prophets* = Former (Zech. i. 4, vii. 7, 12): Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings;—Latter: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

3. *The Psalms*, Holy Writings or Hagiographa = Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles.

The Law, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings is the ordinary Jewish title of the Old Testament.

As nearly as can be ascertained, the chronological order is—

	When written.	History extends From to	Duration.
Genesis	B.C. 1491	4004—1635	2,369 yrs.
Job	1520 (?)	?	? „
Exodus	1490	1635—1490	145 „
Leviticus	1490	1490—1490	1 mo.
Numbers	1451	1490—1452	38 yrs.
Deuteronomy	1451	1451—1451	2 mo.

	When written.	History extends From	to	Duration.
Joshua	B.C. 1420 (?)	1451—	1421 (?)	30 yrs.
Judges	1406	1426—	1117	309 „
Ruth	1312	?		?
1 Samuel	1055	1155—	1055	100 „
2 Samuel	1016	1055—	1017	40 „
1 Chronicles	1015	4004—	1016	2,988 „
Psalms	?	?		?
Song of Solomon	1013 (?)			
Ecclesiastes	1013 (?)			
Proverbs	1013 (?)			
1 Kings	889	1015—	889	126 „

PROPHETS.

I. *Before the Babylonish Captivity.*

Amos	785	810—	785	25 yrs.
Jonah	784	856—	784	72 „
Hosea	725	810—	725	85 „
Micah	699	758—	699	59 „
Isaiah	698	810—	698	112 „
Nahum	698	720—	698	22 „
Joel (?)	660 (?)	810—	660	150 „
Zephaniah	609	640—	609	31 „
Jeremiah (and Lamentations)	586	640—	586	54 „
2 Kings	589	889—	589	300 „
2 Chronicles	536	1016—	536	480 „

II. *During the Captivity.*

Habakkuk	598	612—	598	14 „
Daniel	534	606—	534	72 „
Obadiah	583	588—	583	5 „
Ezekiel	536	595—	536	59 „

III. *After the Captivity.*

Haggai . . .	B.C. 518	520—518	2 yrs.
Zechariah . . .	518	520—518	2 „
Malachi	420	436—420	16 „
Ezra	457	536—457	79 „
Esther (chaps. vi. and vii.)	440	460—440	20 „
Nehemiah . . .	420	446—420	26 „

The usual division according to the English translation is—

1st, *Historical* = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

2nd, *Moral* = Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon.

3rd, *Prophetical* =
- (*a*) Greater = Isaiah, Jeremiah (Lamentations), Ezekiel, Daniel.
- (*b*) Minor = Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

I. THE LAW OF MOSES.

This gives us the Divine history of the world, from its creation to the death of Moses, including the five books of the Pentateuch. "The law was given by Moses" (John i. 17).

GENESIS. *The contents of the Bible.* The acorn from which the great oak grows. The beginning of principles. The whole of revealed truth in embryo. The seed-plot of Scripture. A flower-pot full of roots. Every future truth here seen in emblem. The *types* are generally of some great principles of God's dealing, *e.g.*, as seen from Galatians, "Sarah and Hagar."

"GENESIS" means *beginning*, origin, source; and the first book of the Bible has received this name, because in it we get God's account of the *beginning* of matter and time, and the formation of this planet for the abode of man.

Besides this, it is the *beginning* of God's revelation to man, and in it we get germs of the subsequent revelations contained in the

Word of God. Here we have the beginning of our race, the true origin of species; the beginning of sin (in our race); the introduction of death; the idea of substitution, and blood-shedding, sacrifice, and the faith of the worshipper; an example of one not tasting death; an illustration of God's universal judgment of sin; the origin of covenant, government, and national responsibility to God; the origin of nations and languages; witness to God's judgment; the sovereignty of God, the resources of God, the forbearance of God, and the reward of God; besides unnumbered other representative principles are found as teaching saplings in this typical plot, which lies at the entrance of our King's garden. It is also a book of most wonderful contrasts—

The fallen man and the woman's seed.

The false and true worshipper.

The world's cultivation excluding God, and the godly seed strangers here.

The house of Noah and the rebel world.

The piety and barbarism of Noah's sons.

A godly race and heathendom.

Abraham and his father's house.

Abraham and Pharaoh.
Abraham and the kings.
Sarah and Hagar.
Circumcised and uncircumcised.
Abraham and Lot.
Abraham and Sodom.
Lot and Sodom.
Abraham and Abimelech.
Isaac and Ishmael.
Jacob and Esau.
Joseph and his brethren.

It consists of ten biographies or historical sketches.

1. The eternal power and Godhead of the Creator God.

2. The principle of headship seen in Adam, innocent and fallen.

3. Abel accepted when he brought the sacrifice of blood, and Cain rejected when he brought nature's offering.

4. The occupations of the heavenly seed in Seth's line, and of the worldly seed in Cain's.

5. The walk with God, and its termination seen in Enoch delivered from judgment.

6. The righteous man Noah and his house delivered through judgment.

7. The father of the faithful, Abraham, in his failures and triumphs.

8. The resurrection-son Isaac, and the call of his bride.

9. The supplanting-worm Jacob becomes by the grace of God, Israel, the prince with God.

10. The rejected Joseph becomes the centre of all power and blessing on earth.

God's remedy for man's ruin.

Christ = as the "Seed," the "Angel of Jehovah," = a Man and God. "The Shepherd," "The Stone of Israel," and "Shiloh."

"And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. iii. 16).

EXODUS. *The redemption of the heir*, by blood and by power.

1. The bondage of Abraham's seed in Egypt.

2. Their preservation by the sprinkled blood.

3. Their deliverance through the Red Sea.

4. Their experience in the beginning of the wilderness.

5. The giving of the law.

6. The building of the tabernacle.

7. The establishment of priesthood. Bringing to God. God dwelling with men—a sanctuary, and holiness the consequence. The material of the testimony of Scripture. God related to man in law and in grace; hence a priesthood required to maintain the relationship, since man is no longer innocent. Genesis began with God preparing a house for innocent man. Exodus ends with sinful, redeemed, blood-bought, sanctified, and purified man building a house for God.

God's answer to man's question.

The *types* are, the Lord Jesus Himself in different characters, such as Sacrifice, Priest, and Altar.

Christ = Prophet, Leader, and Passover. "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7).

"Our fathers . . . were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. x. 2).

LEVITICUS. *Nearness to God* in worship and service; hence God speaks not from Sinai, but from the tabernacle to His people around. The priest's guide-book, *sacrifice priest, place of worship.*

The laws of the sanctuary; nothing left to man's taste. The *types*, as in Exodus, derive their chief and only meaning to us from their connection with the great Antitype.

The Hebrew title to this book is the first word *Vayikra* ("and he called"), which is very expressive. It connects it with the conclusion of Exodus. God is in His holy place, built for Him by redeemed man; and from that place He speaks out by His prophet Moses, and is approached by His priest Aaron. Here we find nearness to God by sacrifice through a priest, and in the place of worship.

We have the several sacrifices—

Burnt-offering — "Accepted in the beloved."

Meat-offering—"I am the bread of life."

Peace-offering—"Our fellowship is with the Father."

Sin-offering—"God made Him to be sin for us."

Trespass-offering—"He bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

The priests, consecrated, warned, directed as to clean and unclean, and the sacrifices to bring instruction in ceremonial and moral laws, vows, etc.

God with His people in the holy convocation as a father at a feast.

The Sabbath—Creation rest.

The Passover—Blood-protected.

Unleavened bread—Nourished by God.

Firstfruits, in two parts—Christ raised from the dead, and after fifty days (Pentecost) we united to Him and raised.

Trumpets—God's call to Israel to repent.

Atonement—Israel's repentance and faith.

Tabernacles—Glory filling the earth.

God's provision for man's need.

Christ = Each of the offerings, priest, tabernacle. "How much more shall the blood of Christ" (Heb. ix. 14). "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sin, sat down" (Heb. x. 12).

NUMBERS. *Wilderness wanderings.* The organisation of the form of the Scripture testimony, in camp, Levites, etc. In Balaam's prophecy at Pisgah we have the *prospect* of blessing to Israel, when "it shall be said, what hath God wrought!" and at Peor the *power*, when "a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and Israel shall do valiantly." Wilderness wanderings, manifesting God's provision, and man's waywardness. Man murmured, but God was faithful, and with rock, manna, and pillar-cloud He led them through till a glimpse of the land of promise was obtained, and a prophecy that God's King was to reign there and destroy His enemies (ch. xxiv.).

The *types* are certain dealings of God, on the conduct of man in other dispensations, and pointing to the great acts of God's government still future.

God's order in man's confusion.

Christ = the Rock, Manna, Pillar-cloud, Star out of Jacob, Brazen Serpent (John iii. 14). "That Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). "I am the Bread of Life" (John vi. 35).

"The Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xx. 23). "The Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. xxii. 16).

DEUTERONOMY. *Book of grace or faith. Recapitulation.* "The word is very nigh unto thee" (xxx. 14; Rom. x. 8).

It is worthy of remark, that when Christ, as the perfect Man and the perfect Jew, met Satan, His three quotations were from this Book of Deuteronomy—"By the words of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer."

God's faithfulness and man's failure.

The ways of God with Israel told a second time, but more for a moral than a historical purpose; to stir them up to obedience, and to trust implicitly in the Word of God, and direct their footsteps by it. This is the last of the books which form the Pentateuch.

"This is the law," which David so loved and studied, which Daniel so pondered, which Christ so reverenced, so quoted, and so used in His defence. What Christ employed to defend Himself from Satan we are now called upon to defend against all

attacks. May ours be the place of simple faith, standing beside Jesus, and quoting with Him from the Pentateuch.

Christ = a prophet like Moses, to be heard (xviii. 15). "Him shall ye hear" (Acts vii. 37).

II. THE PROPHETS.

These are divided into two classes, "the former" and "the latter," consisting of twenty-one books. The division is according to the double meaning of prophet, "the former," a *teacher* of past or present; "the latter," a *predictor*.

"*The Prophets*" foretell "the *sufferings* of Christ and the *glory* that should follow" (1 Peter i. 11).

(*a*) The former *Prophets* (Zech. i. 4). The teachers or historians describe the course of events, from the time the Jew was placed in the land, by God's grace and power, till they were led out of the land, through man's failure and sin.

"Be not as your fathers, unto whom the *former* prophets have cried;" also Zech. vii. 7–12. In the former prophets we find six books—Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings.

Joshua. *Redemption of the inheritance,*

corresponding to Revelation. We saw in Exodus the redemption of Israel, as God's heir to inherit the land. In Joshua we find the redemption of the inheritance, by the sword of the Lord, through Jordan (*resurrection*) and circumcision at *Gilgal* (practical mortification), eating the corn (nourishment), and fighting in Canaan (conflict), Eph. vi.

God's power in man's weakness.

Christ = the ark in Jordan. Priests in Jordan. Joshua in conflict and victory as leader.

JUDGES. *Failure of Israel. Gilgal* is changed to *Bochim.*

God's intervention and man's faithlessness.

Christ = the "Saviours" God raised up. "I am with you all the days" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

1 SAMUEL. *Failure of the office of prophetic judge*, and judicial priesthood in *Eli.* Before David the king comes in power, Samuel comes with the light of prophecy, and the flesh obtains its own chosen government, Saul. Priestly succession broken in the ruin of Eli's sons, also in Samuel's sons ; and

nothing is of avail except the testimony of God by Samuel till the king comes.

God's King and man's choice.

Christ = Eli, David, Samuel. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John i. 10, 11).

2 SAMUEL. *God's kingly power* seen in David's reign of forty years. We have here the activity of God's kingly power in a man, while we also see the internal revolution and the sin of man leading to it, while the failures of David are not kept secret.

God's end through man's means.

Christ = Son of David, King of righteousness, in active royalty (Matt. ii. 2). "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25).

1 KINGS. *God's reign of peace* seen in Solomon. The temple is built. Establishment and glory of the kingdom; then the failure of Solomon.

God's glory and man's incapacity.

Christ = "A greater than Solomon," "King of Salem" (Matt. xii. 42). The spotless Son of David, "the Wisdom of

God," "the Prince of Peace," "on earth peace" (Luke ii. 14).

2 KINGS. *Apostasy* perfected and judged. Rehoboam fails. Testimony against them as a kingdom. *Israel's* history till they are taken captive by the Gentiles, and called Lo-ammi ("not My people") by God. Judah comes in incidentally. The nation is seen in its weakness when associated with the world-nations, and God's provision for the faithful few is seen in such histories as those of Elijah, testifying in righteousness on the ground of human responsibility (as did John the Baptist), and of Elisha in grace, emblematical of continuing Elijah's work in resurrection power.

Faith exceptional in Hezekiah, Josiah, and Jehoshaphat; but never successful through world-association.

God's mercy in man's apostasy.

Christ = opposed by power of man, "against the Lord and against His Christ" (Acts iv. 25, 26).

(*b*) The latter *Prophets*—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah,

Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Of these fifteen, ten wrote before the Babylonish Captivity, two during the Captivity, and three after the Captivity. The foretellers of future events, as also describing the present power of Israel, when broken to pieces. Show the Spirit—

(1) Maintaining God's claim because He had chosen Israel;

(2) Testifying against their departure from Him;

(3) Revealing the Messiah as coming to bless on a new footing;

(4) Sustaining the faith of the godly few;

(5) Judging the apostasy of the ungodly many;

(6) Showing that the door would be open to the Gentiles;

(7) Judging the Gentile and infidel oppositions.

God's purposes and man's rebellion.

Isaiah. *The glory of Jehovah* in His purpose with the Jews as a whole. The prospect is the land under glory in its moral

aspects. Here we get the fullest account of God's dealing with Judah (Israel incidentally appearing), showing that all God's dealings with the world would have to do with "Judah and Jerusalem." God's controversy with Israel for idolatry and for rejecting Christ. His judgment on Babylon and Assyria for their opposition to His own. Immanuel is rejected when He comes as a testimony, hence judgment executed on Judah and Jerusalem—and the Gentile blessed. Still after judgment comes fullest blessing at Jerusalem, and through the earth from a reigning Messiah.

God's people and man's confederacies.

Christ = "on the throne of David" (ix. 7, xxiv. 23, xxxii. 1). "Wounded for our transgressions," "Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all," "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him" (Phil. ii. 6–11).

JEREMIAH. *The failure of man.* The weeping prophet prophesied in the land though his heart, in its deepest anguish, was with the captives by Babel's streams. They have become "not the people of God." Still

because Jehovah is their righteousness, Babylon itself will be judged, and Israel shall be established in the land under the Son of David.

God's land secured in spite of man's lordship.

Christ = the Man of Sorrows, the Afflicted One. "In all points tempted as we" (Heb. iv. 15).

EZEKIEL. *Looking from captivity* to the land in its external connections and dependencies. Prophesied in the far-off land of captivity, by the side of the Chebar, and tells of the glory departed, but that the oppressor would be destroyed. The new birth is here revealed as the means of blessing to Israel, who was to be united in the latter day, and would see her enemies destroyed, and the glory of the temple restored.

1. Judgment of Jerusalem and all Israel.
2. Judgment of ungodly oppressors.
3. Judgment of individual souls.
4. Israel to be blest by David's throne being established, and the new birth.
5. Judah and Israel united in one stick.

6. Assyrian Gog destroyed when they are restored in power.

7. A vision of the temple restored.

God's glory over man's defeat.

Christ = the Shekinah departing from Israel and returning. "The Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23).

HOSEA. *Death and Resurrection of Israel.* Lo-ruhamah, the ten tribes, Lo-ammi, the two tribes. Hosea prophesied for about sixty years, dwelt in Samaria, and was the first who foretold the destruction of his country. He speaks of the ruin of both Israel and Judah, the letting in of the Gentiles, an account of the desolation of Israel, but does not end until he gives a glimpse of their future blessedness under Jehovah and David, converted, restored, and united.

God's mercy and man's misery.

Christ = "The Root of David." "All Israel shall be saved" (Rom. xi. 26, ix. 25).

JOEL. *The final threatenings on the land.* The calamities being averted by the repentance of the godly few, and the judgment turned upon their foes. We are here carried

on to the future day of the Lord. Ploughshares to be beaten into swords—the valley of decision—pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, and all called to repentance—a combination of Matt. xxiv. and Acts ii.—ending with perfect blessing to the earth, and "the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

God's day and man's doings.

Christ = coming at the great and terrible day of the Lord. "The brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. ii. 8).

Amos. *Judgment of the people and nations.* The mass of Israel is judged, and the godly Jews spared, while in the end the tabernacle of David is built. "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God."

God's patience with man's iniquity.

Christ = judging His people. "Turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. xi. 26).

Obadiah. *Judgment of Edom.* We know God's designs just as we are separated from evil. The day of the Lord is upon the heathen, and deliverance upon Zion, holi-

ness, blessing, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

God's day and man's doom.

Christ = executes judgment upon all. "Esau have I hated" (Rom. ix. 13).

JONAH. *God's last appeal to the heathen* as their Creator, while all the other prophets are connected with Israel or Judah. The sovereignty of God. He "sent out" the wind, "prepared" the fish, the gourd, the worm, the vehement east wind. Jonah gives us the Old Testament answer to the question, "Is He the God of the Jews only, nay, but of the Gentiles also?"—"Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city wherein are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle."

We have also a type of death and resurrection, as God's way to use sinful man.

God's authority and man's wilfulness.

Christ = the resurrection and the life—greater than Jonas. "So shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40).

MICAH. *Israel, Samaria and Jerusalem judged*, looking forward to restoration. Jerusalem besieged for rejecting Christ, but in the last days seen as the centre of blessing to all the earth. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old."

God's answer (help) *to man's distress.*

Christ = "The ruler in Israel" (Micah v. 2). "A Governor that shall rule My people Israel" (Matt. ii. 6).

NAHUM. *The Lord's revenge on Nineveh*, final and complete. His faithfulness to all that trust in Him and wait for Him. This is the Divine supplement to Jonah. Grace rejected by Nineveh, in Jonah, judgment is foretold in Nahum upon Nineveh. Assyria, representing world-power, opposed to God, is finally put down.

God's vengeance on man's pride.

Christ = breaking as a potter his vessel (power). "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. xix. 6).

HABAKKUK. *The iniquity of God's peo-*

ple, and their oppression by the Chaldeans.

He writes under a burden, receives a vision, and then rises up to Jehovah in a prayer mingled with praise. Jehovah's vision shows him that Jehovah will judge the wicked, and the just shall live by faith; and his prayers manifest him as a relieved, because trusting saint.

Judgment and glory, both in the history and prophecy of Scripture. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord."

God's end to man's way.

Christ = the object of faith. "The just shall live by faith" (Gal. iii. 11).

ZEPHANIAH. *The day of the Lord.* Moral judgment of Jehovah against all unrighteousness and ungodliness. Judgment in the land, Jerusalem the oppressing city, judgment in the nations near, Philistines, Moabites, Amorites, and on those far off, the Assyrians, but mercy to the remnant of Israel. "At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for *I will make you a*

name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord."

God's judgment and man's resources. Christ coming with clouds. "The Judge standeth before the door" (Jas. v. 9; John v. 22).

HAGGAI. *The glory of the latter House*, when all nations have been shaken. The returned captives reproved for having begun to rebuild the house of the Lord, and for being now so tardy in its completion; He lifts up their eyes, however, to the glory that would fill the latter house when all nations would be shaken by Him, and Christ, the Servant and Son, would be taken and be made as a signet, "for I have chosen Thee, saith the Lord of hosts." We are blessed only as identified with the purposes of God. Consider your ways.

God's object to man's hope.

Christ = shaking heaven and earth (Heb. xii. 26). "The sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (Matt. xxiv 29, 30).

ZECHARIAH. *Jehovah is gracious*, but only

in His own way and through His own means. Nation rises up against nation, but He is to be established at Jerusalem, His city and His house to be built. Christ, rejected and smitten, yet Jehovah's fellow, is to come to power, and "He shall build the temple of the Lord, He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne." "The Lord shall be King over all the earth."

God's ways for man's blessing.

Christ = the Branch. The Fellow of Jehovah smitten by Him, wounded in the house of His friends.

Coming: 1. Riding upon an ass. 2. His feet standing on the Mount of Olives. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee" (Matt. xxi. 5).

MALACHI. *Infidelity of the returned captives.* The last prophet historically and morally, shows us that even after restoration the Jews were a total failure, and they are now put in the place of waiting for Christ, Who shall send His messenger before Him, when those who think on His name are brought into remembrance, and the wicked

judged. This messenger was, as Elijah, to turn them to Him: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

God's estimate of man's service.

Christ = The Sun of righteousness, to give healing, and to reward those who fear Him. "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. xix. 16).

III. THE PSALMS.

THIS is the third division of the Hebrew Bible, called by Christ, in Luke xxiv. 44, "the Psalms," the Book of Psalms being the first book of the division. There are thirteen books altogether. These are—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles. It is difficult to give a thoroughly satisfactory reason for some of these, such as from Daniel onwards, appearing here and not among the prophetical books; but they seem to be called "holy writings," from the fact that they derive their chief value from their moral as contrasted with their historical line of teaching. The other twelve divisions of the book refer to a continuous line of history and prophecy, giving us the politics of the chosen nation or the nations of the earth, but this to the development of principles, regardless of exact historical sequences. The other writings

we need not say, are equally holy and inspired, but this has its chief meaning from its moral characteristics.

PSALMS. *The poor man in the desert finds God his portion.* Fragments from the drama of redemption. The activity of the saint in all around and to God.

The book is divided into five books, the first three ending with "Amen and Amen," the fourth with "Hallelujah Amen," and the last with "Hallelujah."

A great principle running through the book is this: one or two psalms give some historical or prophetical facts, then follow three or four more psalms, giving the reflections of the godly man upon such facts. In this light we may view the first two Psalms as a sort of heading to the whole book. In the first Psalm we have the righteous man contrasted with the wicked (we know who is called "the righteous" and who "the wicked," the Christ and the Antichrist). In the second Psalm we find things out of course. The wicked one filling with his servants the seats of power and government

on the earth, while the Righteous One is rejected as (1) Messiah (His anointed), (2) King of Israel, and (3) Jehovah's Son. Does the whole Book of Psalms, thereafter, not give us the Spirit of the Son of David, claiming all for God from the hands of the aliens, and sympathising with all who thus, through much tribulation, inherit the kingdom, till all rule and authority are put down, and the earth is seen to be the Lord's, and everything that hath breath is called to praise Jehovah?

God's portion for man's desolation.

Christ = with and in His people (Israel) in the latter day, laying the foundation of all, and in sympathy with all. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7).

PROVERBS. *The wisest man giving his wisdom* (by the Spirit). Principles to guide man's conduct on earth. Prudence and experience guide the worldly-wise, but heavenly wisdom contained in Revelation points out the Divine path to man, and the violence and corruption in man. As Paul says, in Rom. xvi. 19, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

God's wisdom for man's ignorance.

Christ = the Teacher, Wisdom. "Christ the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24).

Job. *The perfect man abhors himself.* Job was a godly man, but he knew it, allowed it, and boasted of it. His friends were worse than he, for they knew neither righteousness, grace, nor government. Here we find—

1. The saint's discipline in being drawn from what he is by grace, to that grace which has made him what he is, in contrast with the alleged present righteous government of the world.

2. Satan's power over the world, and his accusation of the brethren.

3. God originating all for the discipline, support, and deliverance of His saints. He plans all in wisdom (Elihu) and in power (the whirlwind).

God's discipline for man's righteousness.

Christ = the Daysman, Redeemer. "Able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 18).

Song of Solomon. *The wisest and richest man finding rest,* or being satisfied.

It is the converse of Ecclesiastes. The king has got a worthy object to fill his heart, a centre of love outside of self. He now finds he has an object too large for his heart. "I am sick of love." My beloved is mine; I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me.

God's object for man's affection.

Christ = the manifestation of love. "Christ also loved the Church" (Eph. v. 25).

RUTH. *The Kinsman, Redeemer.* Israel is to be restored, but in grace, and the Gentiles identified with them. The inheritance is purchased for the bride, and the genealogy of the King is divinely preserved. The name of the dead is raised up, "And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."

God's principles and man's plans.

Christ = the Son of David. "Made of the seed of David" (Rom. i. 3).

LAMENTATIONS. *The Man of Sorrows.* The godly prophet weeping over his desolate country and people.

The sympathy of the Spirit of God in the godly man, identified with the few when the

many are apostate, with the hope that they will be turned to Jehovah. As the Psalms show us Calvary, so the Lamentations show us "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,"

Christ = in sympathy by His Spirit hoping for restoration. "Jesus wept" (John xi. 35).

Ecclesiastes. *The wisest and richest man dissatisfied.*

He found that all under the sun is vanity. The king took a snowball in his hand, and it melted, and who can come after the king? Man has a heart too large for all the objects that can be put into it by what is under the sun, and the larger the heart, and the more it is thus fed, the deeper is the dissatisfaction.

Thus it must ever be when man tries to satisfy himself with self as the centre.

God's rebuke to man's efforts.

Christ = alone did the whole duty of man, "I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33).

Esther. *The faithful man protected.* Some have found fault with this book because God's name is never mentioned in

it. This is its very beauty. God's people had departed from Him. He was still watching over, and caring for them providentially, but under a veil. They are not His people, but still He looks after them with a hidden (Esther) love, ending with "Mordecai the Jew, next to the king, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."

The Gentile Bride fails to show her beauty ; therefore the Jewish supersedes.

God's care through man's wanderings.

Christ = now looking after Israel by His Spirit with them. "This generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv. 34).

DANIEL. *The godly man rescued.* The times of the Gentiles. God governs through the alien when His own have failed ; and we have here the history of the whole Gentile dynasty, till Israel, through judgment, get their rightful King, David's unfailing son. All scriptural dates have to do with Daniel's city (Jerusalem), and Daniel's people (the Jews). Daniel has two volumes. The first

half written in Chaldee, giving us the external character of the Gentile power, and revelations to kings; the second written in Hebrew (beginning with chap. vii.), giving the internal history, revelations to Daniel, ending with "Go thou thy way till the end; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

God's government in man's world.

Christ = the little Stone, Ancient of Days, Most High God. "Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xxi. 24).

EZRA. *The learned man of God seeks the law of the Lord.* Partial restoration of the few. The temple rebuilt, but no "glory." The godly waiting for Messiah, and God is worshipped according to what the godly Ezra found in the reopened book.

God's law correcting man's disorder.

Christ = the true Temple. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev. xxi. 22).

NEHEMIAH. *The persevering man sees his end accomplished.* Re-building of the city. Israel placed so as to receive Christ, but

under Gentile dominion, so that the Jews had to render to Cæsar as well as to God. The re-establishment of civil society and positions under the Gentile rule.

God's way with returned wanderers.

Christ = the King of the city (Rev. xxi. 9). "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. xxvii. 37).

1 Chronicles. *The line of redemption* traced till the setting up of David, God's King, who gets the pattern for material for Solomon's temple. Chronicles are only one book in Hebrew, called the Book of Diaries or Journals, or, literally, "The words of days." They give us God's record kept from Adam to Ezra, a *résumé* of the history of 3,468 years. It is the genealogy of Christ from Adam till Lo-ammi. God's history kept up; therefore, God is seen in His faithfulness, not so much of man's failure. As contrasted with Kings, there is more failure and history of the earthly kingdom seen there. God's abstract of sacred history still waiting the Messiah. The first book ends with David, "with all his reign and his might,

and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries."

God's history of man's deeds.

Christ = the Son of Man (Luke iii.). "Angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John i. 51).

2 CHRONICLES. *The line of grace*—from Solomon to the captivity. The line of David's seed through Judah, ending with the first restoration from Babylon through Cyrus after the land had enjoyed her Sabbath ; for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

God's grace and man's demerit.

Christ = the great Deliverer — Cyrus. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer" (Rom. xi. 26).

"THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME."

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

We had a divinely-given threefold division in the Old Testament,—the Law, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings; and for convenience we may adopt a threefold division also for the New:—

1. The Historical, consisting of the Gospels and Acts.

2. The Doctrinal, consisting of the Epistles.

3. The Prophetical, consisting of the Revelation.

I. The Historical Portion.

In it we have the work of Christ in the Gospels, and the work of the Holy Ghost in the Acts.

1. The work of Christ, contained in the four Gospels. Here we find not merely a corroborating testimony from the pens of

four independent writers, which we certainly have, but a divinely-given, four-sided picture of the life of Christ. A carefully-constructed harmony of the Gospels may give us much interesting material for grouping together incidents so as to make an unbroken history ; but much of the moral power of the separate histories is thus lost. Many incidents are taken out of their truly chronological position, in order to give point to some moral teaching. Perhaps the most nearly continuous chronologically is the smallest of all—namely, that of Mark. The order that Luke (in chap. i. 3) gives, we believe to be moral—such as Theophilus, a lover of God, could appreciate.

When great men die, it is quite usual for men to take up different sides of their characters. Let us suppose that a great man has died who has been a physician, a Christian, a poet, and an antiquarian. To do full justice to such a man's life, he would require four biographers, and historical facts would appear in quite different connections as they had their places in the four different narratives. So with the four Gospels. Thus, if we are

to derive full benefit from the perusal of the Gospels, we must read each by itself, and ever bear in mind the line that is going through the book, the theme that is in the writer's mind. Several titles have been given, and theories advanced reviving the fanciful ideas of the Fathers, such as comparing them to the four living creatures; and here some have one fancy, others another. They are all harmless, and perhaps some helpful as illustrations, and useless as doctrines—but as far as possible, we would try to find the key in the writers themselves, and, as usual, we find it hanging near the door.

1. The Subject of each Gospel.

Matthew. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Does this first verse not give us the title of the whole book?

The son of David shows His Kingship, and the son of Abraham His Jewish character. His book of genealogy is given in the first chapter, but His *Jewish Kingship* is the theme

of the book. Just as we bear this clearly in view, will Matthew's Gospel be plain to us.

MARK. Begins with "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." May this not be the substance of the book? God's Son on earth proclaiming and manifesting the Gospel. Ministering to man for God's glory!

LUKE. Groups facts together in a moral order, and in the genealogy of his third chapter, goes past David and Abraham up to Adam, and thus gives us Christ as the true Son of man in His Gentile relations.

JOHN. Gives us the key to all his book in the first three verses. God is now presented to men as the incarnate Word, God is manifest in the flesh. The Word is eternal as to His existence, for He "*was* in the beginning." The Word is distinct in His person, for He "was with God." He is Divine in His nature, for He "was God," and this distinctness was eternal, for "the same was in the beginning with God." This is the Divine, eternal, wonderful, transcendent, unfathomable subject of which John treats.

For these different subjects we find, as we might expect, a Divine fitness in

2. The Writers.

Matthew was Levi the publican, a Jew who afterwards became an apostle.

Mark was not an apostle, but was helpful to them as a minister or servant in the Gospel of the Son of God (2 Tim. iv. 11). He was specially connected with Peter the apostle of the circumcision (1 Peter v. 13).

Luke was an evangelist, a medical man and a Gentile, specially associated with Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles (Acts xvi. 11, "*We* sailed"—Luke wrote "the Acts").

John was a fisherman, became an apostle, and is constantly spoken of as being with Christ.

We shall, of course, thus find diversity in—

3. Their Style.

Matthew is historical, and has a matter-of-fact way of putting things. Quotes from the Hebrew, and does not explain his quotations. It is supposed that he originally

wrote the Gospel in the Hebrew tongue. All the others wrote undoubtedly in Greek.

MARK is vivid and pictorial, quotes from the Septuagint (the Old Testament translated into Greek). He explains Hebraisms.

LUKE writes as a man of education in more classical Greek, quotes the Septuagint, and extends the quotations found in Matthew to their Gentile terminations.

JOHN writes in a homely and plain style, also quotes from the Septuagint.

Each writer has a distinct aim and a certain class of people more especially in his mind.

4. THEIR AIM.

MATTHEW was written principally for the Jews, to show that Jesus was the Christ, the minister of the circumcision, as contrasted with all false Christs and false religions; hence we have the full history of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew we find Christ's discourses principally.

MARK seems to be written for men as such —To instruct doubting ones; and thus we have a picture of the Son of God as a

minister of the gospel. We have more His works than His words. "*Immediately*" is very often used in this picture of the works of the Son of God.

LUKE was written to stop the spread of spurious gospels and idle stories, and addressed with a view to bring in the Gentiles. Here we find the kingdom of God and His power for deliverance extended to the nations; it partakes of the character of a treatise, and the prayers of the dependent Son of man are very prominent.

JOHN was last written, and supplies things left out in the others. He also writes to silence the philosophising knowing ones (the Gnostics —principally Nicolaitanes and Cerinthians); and it partakes largely of the character of a memoir of the Divine doctrines of the Word as contrasted with all human philosophy, and is written, not for Jews or Gentiles as such, but for the needy wheresoever found.

We may glance at some peculiarities of each.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called "the Synoptical Gospels;" John has been called

"the Spiritual Gospel." The former show us God offered to man and rejected by him. In these we have His works, and the latter gives us His person, that is, God for man as eternal life, unbounded love, and all-manifesting light.

In Mark and John we get neither His birth nor His genealogy. Only in Mark and Luke do we find His ascension. All meet at His cross and empty grave.

A convenient title might be given to each by a text of Scripture. We would thus have for

MATTHEW. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." For here we have His Jewish royalty, as Son of David and Abraham.

MARK. "He took upon Him the form of a servant." For here He is presented in His humility as the Son of God in the gospel.

LUKE. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." For we have His true humanity as Son of Adam.

JOHN. "As many as received Him, to

them gave He power [right] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." For here is depicted His true Divinity—God manifest in the flesh; the Divine, eternal, and personal *Logos*.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

We find in the four Gospels and the Acts, the dawn of the day of grace to the world at large, just as in the Revelation we have the dawn of the day of judgment. The great bulk of the history of the four Gospels is comprised in the three years and a half of our Lord's public ministry. We have glanced at the distinctive points in the Gospels. We now endeavour to give the contents of each: Matthew is the Gospel of—

The Kingdom of Heaven.

Hence the first chapter very properly gives us the genealogy of the King, tracing Him no further back than Abraham, through David, but proving, beyond a doubt, that He was the rightful heir to the throne of His

father David. It is not His Kingship over nations or the world, or His Lordship over His Church, that we have in Matthew but His right to sit as King of the Jews on David's throne. His name as such has to be divinely given—Jesus, or Joshua, or Jah-Hoshua; *Jehovah a Saviour*, which the Holy Ghost tells us (i. 23) is equivalent to Emmanuel, *God with us*. That is to say, if man is to have a saviour, none less than God can save; and if God is to be with us, He can appear only as a Saviour.

The second chapter gives the birth of the King, and the persecution of the Man-Child Who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Rev. xii. 5).

The third chapter introduces us to John the Baptist, the righteous preacher of repentance, and the forerunner of the King.

The fourth chapter lays before us the trial and triumph of the King in the controversy with Satan, who laid before Him the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, as he had done before the first man.

Chapters fifth, sixth, and seventh unfold

the principles, laws, and blessings of the kingdom—the royal kingdom code.

In chapter viii. Christ comes down from the mountain, and touching a leper, not only is not defiled, but cures the leper. Here we have the works of the kingdom of Him "Who healeth all thy diseases." Other works of Jehovah, the healer of Israel, are given—the cure of the palsied man and the fever of Peter's mother-in-law; as also the casting out of demoniacs at Gadara, the cure of the issue of blood, the two blind men, the dumb man, and the raising of Jairus' daughter.

In chapter x. His disciples are sent forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven, with fitting instructions as to wherein their power and weakness lay.

In chapter xi. John, the forerunner of the King, sent from prison a question, the answer to which opens up the characteristics of Christ's mission and kingdom, as contrasted with John's testimony, concluding with the upbraiding of the cities in which He had performed most of His mighty works. And at

that time, when man had so completely failed to see His glory, and had rejected Him, He turns to His Father, and finds rest in the thought that, "so it seemed good in Thy sight;" opening out His arms more widely, not only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but to all who, labouring and heavy laden, were seeking rest, and asking His followers to take His yoke and find His rest.

Chapter xii. introduces us to the moral judgment of the religious leaders of Israel, consequent upon the rejection photographed in the former chapter, showing Israel's state in rejection of Messiah as ending in a worse state than its first, while He enters into special relations with those who do the will of the Father.

Chapter xiii. is very important. It is the keystone to the arch of Matthew's building. All previous to this is working up to it—all subsequently is working from it. The question is, since the King has now been definitely rejected by His own, how is the kingdom to go on? It is to go on before the eyes of the

world, and it is to go on in a mystery, seen only to the eyes of faith. Hence He speaks seven parables. The first four the multitude heard, the last three only the disciples heard; and to them alone He explained any of the parables—only the first two by which, however, they were to know all parables. Note, the kingdom of heaven is the subject. The King has been refused His throne—by-and-by will be murdered. How is this kingdom to go on? In a twofold manner—externally and ruinous, internally and perfect. Externally ruinous because of man's rejection. Internally perfect because of God's faithfulness. The external aspect is shown to the multitude as well as to His followers; the internal only to His followers.

The first parable, that of the sower, shows us much sowing and little result. The devil takes one seed, the flesh another, and the world another, while only one out of four grows up to the Son of Man as Sower. The second parable shows us that among even these the devil sows tares, so that the field is useless as a wheat-field, for the tares can-

not be taken up. The mustard-seed shows it spreading till it fills the whole earth, but giving shelter to the very birds that pick up the Gospel-seed. And the leaven shows us the spread internally of that which had contaminated it at first. All this is written by a Divine hand, and is strongly seen in the present state of Christendom.

But internally the kingdom is so precious, that He bought the field for the treasure (His Church) hid in the world—giving up all that He had; and its unity and purity in Him is seen, in the pearl that was sought by Him and found. The action of His followers is seen in gathering the netful out of the sea (not the abundance of the sea yet), and the judgment at the end.

The next three chapters show us what leaven is.

Chapter xiv. gives us the leaven of Herod; the world dancing and murdering God's witness; while, in contrast, Jesus is meeting man's need in Israel.

Chapter xv. gives us the leaven of the Pharisee; the outside washed, and the heart

far from God and full of all evil; while, in contrast, Jesus is unmasking man's hypocrisy, and showing His own heart to the woman of Canaan.

Chapter xvi. gives us the leaven of the Sadducee—infidelity demanding a sign; and, in contrast, Jesus giving a new revelation concerning His Church, as founded on the confession of the Christ the Son of the living God. Verse 12 shows us that leaven is the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Chapter xvii., in the midst of man's utter evil and rejection of our Lord, gives us a glimpse of the glory of the King as He will one day appear in glory with His raised (Moses) and changed (Elijah) saints. Peter, James, and John were the three witnesses of this scene of glory before tasting of death; as Peter tells us (2 Peter i. 16).

Chapter xviii. shows us that he who is greatest in this kingdom is not he who arrays himself in most splendour, but the man of humility, forbearance, and self-mortification; dealing in discipline one with the other is here considered.

Chapter xix. teaches us that grace does not touch natural ties, and only by grace can we enter the kingdom.

Chapter xx. God's right to be gracious in His kingdom is demonstrated, and man's sin of ambition reproved.

Chapter xxi. The King presents Himself, according to Zech. ix. 9, as riding into Jerusalem, and by illustration and parable, shows man's failure when chief priests and elders challenge Him. He gets leaves only from all His own cultivation. "I go, sir, and he went not," shows us profession without reality. God's training of Israel only results in showing them to be murderers. The stone that the builders rejected is to become the head of the corner.

Chapter xxii. Man despises the gracious invitation to the marriage of the King's son, and all objectors are answered. Chief priests and elders, by the question as to John (xxi. 23); Pharisees and Herodians, as to the rights of Cæsar and God; the Sadducees, by God being the I AM of Abraham; and the lawyer by David's son and David's Lord.

So no man from that day forth durst ask Him any more questions.

Chapter xxiii. The woes of the King are pronounced, while His sorrow over the city and nation is touchingly described before the house is left desolate, until His return in glory.

Chapters xxiv. and xxv. give a remarkable prediction of judgments to come, with what went before the destruction of Jerusalem, and what will usher in the day of judgment. The destruction of Jerusalem is not in Matthew, it is in Luke.

In chapter xxiv. 1–31 we have the *Jews* in testimony, in presence of the great abomination, and in deliverance (hence does not refer to the siege of Titus). From xxiv. 32 to xxv. 30 we see the *servant* waiting for the sudden and unexpected return of the master, in responsible ministry, in individual responsibility and individual faithfulness. To the end of chapter xxv. we have the judgment of the *nations* according to their conduct towards the brethren of the Son of man.

Chapter xxvi. is peculiarly solemn, showing

the wonderful appreciation of the King (see Song of Solomon i. 12) by the woman with the alabaster box. Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper, to be observed till the return of the King—and then the utter failure of all around Him, as He was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, forsaken by all.

Chapter xxvii. reads to us man's bitterest hate, and God's deepest love in the King of the Jews, murdered by man, but seen to be God's Lamb.

Chapter xxviii. tells of God's wondrous power in His resurrection and manifestation to disciples, and His parting command to evangelise all nations, by His power in heaven and earth and His promised presence.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

The first words give us the contents of this Gospel—"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." In this Gospel we have God's Son in the activities of His Divine service, in the good news which He brought to men, healing all their diseases, and forgiving all their sins. We

are introduced to Him at once as a grown man—we have no babe, no genealogy. The order maintained in Mark is more closely historical than any of the others.

Chapter i. (1 to 13). His preparation; His messenger goes before Him; and He is baptized of the Spirit.

Chapter i. 14 to ix. His life of faith, and labour of love in the activities of preaching and healing as God's Son in the midst of Israel.

Mark alone tells of the seeds growing up insensibly (iv. 26); of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech cured (vii. 31); and the blind man at Bethsaida cured (viii. 22).

Chapter x. His decease anticipated, and His path to suffering.

Chapters xi. and xii. Entry into Jerusalem and His controversies there.

Chapter xiii. His word of prophecy concerning Israel that had rejected Him.

Chapters xiv. and xv. His last sufferings and crucifixion.

Chapter xvi His resurrection, manifesta-

tion, commission, and ascension, and the obedience of His followers.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

"In order" is the expression peculiar to Luke's Gospel written to Theophilus. This "order" is, however, not historical, but moral, grouping incidents together to give us the teachings of the great Teacher. Jewish customs and worship are explained here as for Gentile readers. Christ's genealogy is traced up through Adam to God, as He was the perfect man—the Son of man. Raising the widow of Nain's son, the parables of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, Dives and Lazarus, the account of the ten lepers, the Pharisee and publican, Zaccheus, the ten pounds, and the penitent thief, are given to us only by Luke. He shows marks of education and culture, using very good Greek, having been trained for the medical profession. The divisions of his Gospel are very simple and well defined.

Chapters i. and ii. His birth and its annunciation.

Chapter ii. His early life and education.

Chapters iii. and iv. His entrance into public life, giving His baptism, genealogy, and temptation.

Chapters v. to ix. 50. His work in Galilee.

Chapter ix. 51 to xix. 44. His journey to Jerusalem.

Chapter xix. 28 to xxiii. Sojourn and crucifixion in Jerusalem.

Chapter xxiv. Resurrection and ascension.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

Luke writes about the Son of man presented to the Gentiles, as Matthew wrote of the Son of Abraham to the Jews; but when we come to John we get the highest of all, namely,—

God manifest in the flesh.

God living here as a man.

The life and death of the *God-Man.*

If we look at Paul's Epistle to the Romans, we find that he begins with man as he finds him, Gentile and Jew, as bad as he could be, and in God's sight all condemned and no difference; but he does not leave him till he

sets him down as a justified man walking in communion with God.

John begins at the other end. He begins with the great uncreated God on the throne of immensity and in the undated eternity, and brings Him down to walk on earth with man.

Paul describes the justified man walking with God.

John describes the eternal God walking with man. And what could be more wonderful ?

We have not to guess about God, or try to imagine what He is like. He has been here ; He has been in our stables, in our streets, and at our tables. The Man of sorrows is our God, our Maker, our Saviour, our Judge. We are not called to love, or worship, or obey a cloud or a phantom, nor worship Him by a representation, or image, or crucifix. We have intelligence about Him. We know Him. He is described to us by one who lay on His bosom, who handled Him. Jesus of Nazareth is our God.

John i. 10, may be taken as the heading of Luke's Gospel.

John i. 11, that of Matthew.

John i. 12, that of John.

Luke tells us of the Son of man, the Lord of all creation, Who was disallowed of men.

"*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.*"

Matthew tells us of the rightful Son of David, Whose crown-rights were denied.

"*He came unto His own* (country * and kingdom) *and His own* (people,† the Jews) *received Him not.*"

John tells us of God's refuge for believers.

"*As many as received Him, to them gave He power* (authority) *to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name.*"

The writings of John on this account have had a peculiar charm to all Christians, in all lands and in all times.

Three essentials of God especially do we find revealed by John—

Eternal *life.*

Divine *love.*

Heavenly *light.*

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* τὰ ἴδια, neuter. † οἱ ἴδιοι, masculine.

Life, love, and light, such as are in God essentially, the world never knew of, but in Christ.

Life. The world knew of existence and the immortality of the soul, but *eternal* life that could conquer death and raise the body was revealed only in Christ, and by John specially.

Love. The world can love the loving, the lovely, or lovable; but herein is love, He loved a lost world. The love of grace is seen only in Christ.

Light. Overlooking nothing, judging all things, putting all in their true colour, was seen only in Christ.

But just on this account did men hate Him and kill Him, and the question is, since they have slain the Son of God, and expelled the light, refused the life, and hated the love, where can it now be seen?

John answers this in his Epistles, which are the complement of the Gospel, and show that—

"Now we are the sons of God."

"We are the *light* of the world."

"All men know we are His, because we *love* one another."

"We have eternal *life*."

For convenience, John's Gospel may be divided into four parts—

I.–IV., Christ, the heavenly stranger on earth, carrying God's grace to the needy and sinful.

V.–XII., Christ with the Jews.

XIII.–XVII., Christ with His own.

XVIII.–XXI., Christ in His sufferings, death, and resurrection.

THE ACTS.

This is the second division of the historical part of the New Testament.

It is the history of the Holy Ghost laying the foundation of the Church. It is generally called the Acts of the Apostles. More correctly it is the acts of the Holy Ghost in the apostles, and principally in two of them, Peter and Paul, and is a continuation of Luke's treatise on the Gospel. Peter is prominent in the first twelve chapters as the apostle to the Jews, and everything has a

transitional and Jewish character more or less. From the xiii. to the end, Paul the apostle to the Gentiles is the prominent witness. Peter opens up the kingdom. Christ gave him the keys (Matt. xvi. 19). The Holy Ghost reveals through Paul the mystery of Christ and the Church ("Why persecutest thou Me?"). The title of the Acts might be, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (i. 8).

II. THE DOCTRINAL PORTION.

This consists of letters written by various servants of God to Churches, individuals, or on general topics, and this constitutes a convenient division.

1st, Letters specially addressed (Paul's).

2nd, Letters of general interest (the other writers).

1st, Letters specially addressed. There are fourteen, all of which the Apostle Paul writes.

(*a*) To Churches, of which there are nine.

(*b*) To individuals, there are four.

(*c*) To Hebrews, one.

In considering the first of these—

(*a*) Paul's special letters to the Churches—

We shall consider that which, though not first in time, is the foundation of the whole, namely, his letter which he wrote from Corinth to the Romans.

ROMANS.

Paul seems to have written this Divine letter from Corinth about the year 58 A.D. He

had not been at Rome, hence his style seems to be more formal and systematic than to the Churches he had visited. Above all such accidental questions, we rejoice to know that really it is not Paul who made the letter, but the Holy Ghost revealed God's mind through Paul. Nor did the letter exist merely for the saints at Rome, but for us also.

We may look at this letter as being the best, because the Divine, commentary on justification by faith. Again, we see another line of wonderful import running through the book. God is not known, but as He has revealed Himself. The things of time and sight absorb man's thoughts. The things of God come from the eternal and unseen. Man's wisdom, man's science, could never reach up to them. The letter to the Roman Christians reveals to us some of the things that are "of God." When Peter was judging of the cross from a human standpoint, Jesus said to him, "Thou savourest not the things that be *of God*, but those that be *of men*." They are entirely opposed. The things of God oppose those that be of men. Paul

could say (Rom xv. 17), "I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God," and this letter is a summary of them.

The things that be of God.

The gospel of God—i. 1 ; xv. 16.
The Son of God—i. 4.
Beloved of God—i. 7.
The will of God—i. 10 ; xii. 2 ; xv. 32.
The power of God—i. 16.
The righteousness of God—i. 17 ; iii. 5, 21, 22 ; x. 3.
The wrath of God—i. 18.
The glory of God—i. 23 ; iii. 23 ; v. 2 ; xv. 7.
The truth of God—i. 25 ; iii. 7 ; xv. 8.
The haters of God—i. 30.
The judgment of God—i. 32 ; xi. 33 ; ii. 2, 3, 5.
The goodness of God—ii. 4 ; xi. 22.
The praise of God—ii. 29.
The oracles of God—iii. 2.
The faith of God—iii. 3.
The fear of God—iii. 18.

The forbearance of God—iii. 25.
The promise of God—iv. 20.
The love of God—v. 5; viii. 39.
The grace of God—v. 15.
The gift of God—vi. 23.
The law of God—vii. 22, 25; viii. 7.
The Spirit of God—viii. 9, 14; xv. 19.
Sons of God—viii. 14, 19.
Children of God—viii. 16, 21; ix. 8, 26
Heirs of God—viii. 17.
Elect of God—viii. 33.
The purpose of God—ix. 11.
The Word of God—x. 17.
The answer of God—xi. 4.
The severity of God—xi. 22.
The gifts of God—xi. 29.
The calling of God—xi. 29.
The wisdom of God—xi. 33.
The knowledge of God—xi. 33.
The ways of God—xi. 34.
The mind of God—xi. 33.
The mercies of God—xii. 1.
The power of God—xiii. 1.
The ordinance of God—xiii. 2.
The minister of God—xiii. 4.

The kingdom of God—xiv. 17.

The work of God—xiv. 20.

The commandment of God—xvi. 26.

Consider these forty-six "things that be of God," spoken of in this epistle, and you will not find one that we know of by nature, or could rise up to the full cenceptions of by all the human wisdom of all ages. Any ladder, or all the ladders of earth, might reach the highest pyramid, or scale the loftiest mountain, but they could never reach the stars. Man's wisdom may rise to the summit of the "things that be of men," but "these things which pertain to God," come by direct revelation.

But this revelation comes to reasoning and rebellious men; hence the spirit of Paul anticipates and answers the inferences that the human mind would draw from a revelation new and strange to it, and coming against all its preconceived arrangements and notions. In condescending love, God has answered these, as far as we can understand them. Beyond this we have to say, "Who art thou that repliest against God?"

Look at the letter to the Romans, in all the questions therein suggested to the mind of man, and all the inferences drawn by the reason of men, and we find as expressed in chapter xi. 4:

"*What saith the* ANSWER OF GOD *to him?*"

Q. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? (iii. 1).

A. You have the oracles of God which tell what you are (iii. 10).

Q. What if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? (iii. 3).

A. Let God be true and every man a liar (iii. 4).

Q. Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance, if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God? (iii. 5).

A. How shall God judge the world? (iii. 6).

Q. If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? Let us do evil that good may come (iii. 7).

A. Whose damnation is just (iii. 8).

Q. Are we better than they? (iii. 9).

A. Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (iii. 9).

Q. Where is boasting then? (iii. 27).

A. It is excluded by the law of faith (iii. 27).

Q. Is He the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? (iii. 29).

A. Yes of the Gentiles also (as justifying, iii. 29).

Q. Do we then make void the law? (iii. 31).

A. We establish the law (iii. 31).

Q. What shall we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (iv. 1).

A. Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (iv. 3).

Q. What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (vi. 1).

A. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (vi. 2).

Q. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? (vi. 15).

A. Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (vi. 18).

Q. Is the law sin? (vii. 7).

A. No. It detects sin. The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good (vii. 12).

Q. Was then that which is good made death unto me? (vii. 13).

A. Sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful (vii. 13).

Q. Is there unrighteousness with God? (ix. 14).

A. He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion (ix. 15).

Q. Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? (ix. 19).

A. Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? (ix. 20).

Q. Hath God cast away His people? (xi. 1).

A. There is a remnant according to grace (xi. 5). . . . All Israel shall be saved (xi. 26).

Q. Have they stumbled that they should fall? (xi. 11).

A. If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? (xi. 15).

This is the Divine Shorter Catechism, contained in the Epistle to the Romans—God's answers to man's questions.

In John's Gospel we see the eternal God coming out from His eternity, and being seen in time, coming from His throne and treading on earth, clothing His Divinity in our humanity—God's coming from heaven to walk before men; but in Paul's letter to the Romans we are introduced to man—all men—down in the bottom of the pit of miry clay, some to the knees and some to the neck, but all in the pit, and no difference. We are then shown the ladder that is used to bring them up, and we thus see their feet put on the rock, and the letter ends with a saved

man walking before a holy God. John shows us a gracious God walking before sinful men.

The structure of the letter is exceedingly plain. It consists of four great divisions, with an introduction and a conclusion.

The *introduction* is the first eighteen verses of the first chapter.

The first division extends from i. 19, to iii. 29, and shows us man before God in himself.

The second division extends from iii. 21 to viii. 39, and shows us man before God in Christ.

The third division extends from ix. 1 to xi. 36, and is a parenthesis to reconcile this grace to man as man, with the promises given to Abraham, and God's nation the Jews.

The fourth division extends from xii. 1 to xv. 13, and gives us the path of the man in Christ.

The conclusion extends from xv. 13 to the end.

The book takes up the vilest of sinners,

and tells what he is, saves him, shows that this is in perfect harmony with God's ways, and then leads him in the paths of righteousness. In this way it is a contrast to John's Gospel. There we see the uncreated Word of God manifest in the flesh, descending from the bosom of the Father to this earth and walking with men. Here we see the chief of sinners ascending from the horrible pit of sin, to walk in a holy path with God. These four divisions of the book may also be looked at as answering four questions.

I. What is man?

II. How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

III. Hath God cast away His people?

IV. Shall we continue in sin?

And answering these we have—

I. Man's ruin. Guilty in every way.

II. God's remedy. God just and the Justifier.

III. The Jews' history. God faithful to His promises.

IV. The Christian's path. Divine morality.

GALATIANS.

We take the Epistle to the Galatians after that to the Romans, because Galatians takes up controversially what Romans puts systematically. In Romans we are justified by faith; in Galatians we are justified by faith alone. In Romans Christ is a sufficient Saviour; in Galatians He is an exclusive Saviour. Nothing must be brought in alongside of Him. The moment we do so the platform of grace is left. Galatians was written to counteract the teaching of Judaising legalists, who wished to add circumcision and Judaism to the simple faith in Christ. Paul meets this, and sets his face against "another gospel," with whatever credentials it might appear. If an angel from heaven supported this other gospel, all the worse for the angel. If the great apostle Peter attempted it, Paul withstood him; and if the rank and file of the Galatians accepted it, Christ was no use to them.

The great theme of the epistle is, "His Son in me" (i. 16). The Son of God dwelling

in men is the living power as contrasted with an external ritual. In chap. ii. 4, our liberty is "in Christ Jesus;" and verse 20, "Christ liveth in me." In chap. iv. 6, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father;" and verse 19, Paul was in pain "until Christ be formed in you;" and verse 31, we are "children of the free." In chap. v. 24, "As Christ's we have crucified the flesh;" and in chap. vi. 2, "We fulfil the law of Christ;" finally, verse 15, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

It was in the desert of Arabia that Paul got this sight of Christ as an exclusive Saviour. The Son indwelling is the contrast to all externalism, so in chap. ii. he advises Peter to betake himself to the desert to learn this lesson; and in chap iii., the foolish Galatians are told that they require the same lesson.

Two words in Galatians are very prominent, "*law*" and "*cross*." In chap. ii. 19, 20, their relation the one to the other is seen;

and the epistle explains the contrast between them. The law is the measure of, and the cross is the end of, human righteousness.

The Law.

1. The law and the cross. The law nails the sinner to the cross (ii. 20).

2. The law and faith. The Spirit came not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith (iii. 2).

3. The law and promise. "Is the law against the promise of God?" (iii. 21).

4. The law and sonship. Ishmael and Isaac (iv.).

5. The law and grace. If justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace (v. 4).

6. The law and love. "By love serve one another" (v. 13, 14).

7. The law and the Spirit. "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (v. 18).

The Cross.

1. The cross and the law. The cross has rendered me dead to the law (ii. 19).

2. The cross and false doctrine (iii. 1).

3. The cross and the curse. We are redeemed from the curse, for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (iii. 13).

4. The cross and its offence (v. 11).

5. The cross and the flesh. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" (v. 24).

6. The cross and persecution (vi. 12).

7. The cross and the world. "By Whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world" (vi. 14).

Doctrinal departure from God is very serious. Paul writes more kindly to Corinthian backsliders than to Galatian heretics. We find no salutations, and few endearing words, as in other letters. This is solemn in these days when men do not like sound doctrine.

EPHESIANS.

As we have two epistles, Romans and Galatians, giving us the individual justified, so we have Ephesians and Colossians setting before us truth concerning the aggregate of individual believers—the Church. Paul

alone was privileged to be the channel to reveal the mystery of the Church, and it is in Ephesians and Colossians he does so. In Ephesians we are shown what the body is to the head—"the fulness or complement of Him that filleth all in all."

Chap. i. We have the counsels and purpose of the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning the body.

Chap. ii. God's work is seen in forming the body, the members of which He found dead in sin; but whom He quickened, raised, and seated in heavenly places in Christ.

Chap. iii. We are shown that the Gentiles are brought into the body; the middle wall of partition being broken down, those far off and those nigh are brought into the same relation that the Son has with the Father.

Chap. iv. 1–16. Gives us the unities of the body—one Spirit, one Lord, and one God, and others dependent on these. One Spirit unites us, one Lord we profess to serve, one God and Father is over all.

Chaps. iv., v., vi. introduce us to the walk

of the members of the body, consequent on their heavenly calling.

Chap. vi. The latter verses give us the conflict of the members of the body in heavenly places.

The Heavenlies.

1. In Ephesians i. 3, "We are blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." We have them all as a present possession in Christ. This is in contrast with the Jew who was blessed with all temporal blessings in earthly places in Canaan.

2. Christ has been "raised from the dead, and set at God's right hand in the heavenlies" (i. 20).

3. We are "raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ" (ii. 6).

4. God's purpose in saving us is that "now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God" (iii. 10).

5. Our conflict is only in the heavenlies, as Israel's wars were in Canaan. (The conflict in Galatians is Spirit against flesh; in Ephesians it is we against Satan.) "We wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies."

The Spirit

is frequently mentioned in Ephesians.

We are "*sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise" (i. 13).

He is *the earnest* of our inheritance (i. 14).

Access of both Jew and Gentile through Christ by one Spirit to the Father (ii. 18).

We are *builded* together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (ii 22).

The mystery is *revealed* to us by the Spirit (iii. 5).

We are *strengthened* with might by His Spirit (iii. 16).

We are to endeavour to keep *the unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace (iv. 3).

We are admonished to *grieve* not the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed (iv. 30).

The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth (v. 9).

We are exhorted to be *filled* with the Spirit (v. 18).

For our conflict, to take *the sword* of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (vi. 17).

Praying always with all *prayer and supplication* in the Spirit (vi. 18).

The firstfruit of the Spirit is love; so it is not strange that "love" runs through this epistle like a stream of life.

In Love

We *stand* before God holy, blameless, and in love, in Christ (i. 4).

We are *rooted* and *grounded* in love, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith (iii. 17).

Forbearing one another in love, we are to walk worthy of our high calling (iv. 2).

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ (iv. 15).

The *edifying* of the body is in love (iv. 16).

We *walk* in love as followers of God, as Christ also hath loved us (v. 2).

Two Names.

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (i. 3). This brings us into two relations, holy, blameless, and in love before God—predestinated to the adoption of children to the Father. Paul prays two prayers : to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may know all that is put under us (i. 15) ; to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may adore the love that is above us (iii. 14). Our responsibilities spring from these names. As children and parents, we are to walk as before our one Father ; as servants and masters before our one God (vi.). We are children of the Father, servants of God.

COLOSSIANS.

Colossians is the converse of Ephesians. In Ephesians we saw what the body is to the

Head—"The fulness of Him that filleth all in all." In Colossians we have what the Head is to the body—"Ye are complete in Him." And the whole teaching of each epistle is consistent with this distinction. If the body is the complement of the Head, as we find in Ephesians, then we have "the Spirit" often mentioned. Only once in Colossians is He mentioned, and that is in the introduction, as if linking the epistles. Epaphras "also declared unto us your love in the Spirit." In Colossians we have the Head as the complement of the body, so there is no mention of being seated in the heavenlies, but men saved on earth, with Christ their life, and a hope laid up in heaven. In Ephesians we are not spoken of as dead with Christ, but only dead in sins; in Colossians we find both. In Ephesians the great thing brought before us is "*the grace of God*," its object being man; in Colossians we have "*man*" as the object of grace.

In Ephesians the Apostle had two prayers —one to the God, the other to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Colossians

he says, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." Consistent with the character of the epistle, as showing us the Head, we find Christ in His two headships—His essential and His acquired. He is the Head of creation essentially; for, as the image of the invisible God, He is the firstborn of all creation. He is the Head of the body, the firstborn from among the dead. But man has departed from God, and involved creation in the ruin, so we see Him in His double headships, reconciling all to Himself. The reconciliation of creation is a thing yet to come, but our reconciliation is accomplished. "You who were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled." Mark the number of "haths:"—"Hath made us meet," "hath delivered us," "hath translated us," "we have redemption," "hath reconciled," because all is complete in the Head. In the administration of His double headship, He uses Paul and His other servants in a double capacity. Paul was minister to Christ as

Head of creation, and thus "preached to every creature which is under heaven." He was also a minister of Christ as Head of the body, "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints."

In seeing Christ as "the Head" we find that "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Hence comes our reconciliation; also in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And this is the safety of the saints against all rationalism, "philosophy, and vain deceit." Reasoning man comes endeavouring to beguile the saint with enticing words. What is his reply? "Does this come from Christ? For all wisdom and knowledge are hid in Him." Again, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in Him." Therefore the traditions of men, after the elements of the world, with circumcision and all its train of ordinances, are met by the saint being dead and risen.

At chap. ii. 16, the general application follows:—The flesh would go to one extreme

or the other, either to asceticism or licentiousness. The last verses of chap. ii. show us that asceticism, far from sanctifying us, actually satisfies the flesh; and how can a Christian be subject to human ordinances when he is a dead man? The first verses of chap. iii. give us the Divine cure for licentiousness. "We are risen with Christ, therefore we are to mortify our members which are upon the earth;" and as those whose life is Christ, we shall neither be ascetic nor licentious; but our rule will be this, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

Dead with Christ gives liberty.

Resurrection with Christ gives power.

The special application to the details of everyday life follows—wives to husbands, husbands to wives, children to parents, parents to children, servants to masters, and masters to servants. He begins with the nearer, and gives the weaker first in each correlated relation. The "Lord Christ" is mentioned here the only time in Scripture,

the special name of encouragement to slaves, as He, the perfect Servant, has been made both Lord and Christ. The epistle ends with an exhortation concerning their activities in prayer, walk, and speech, with the apostolic salutations.

If Christ is our Head, and all fulness is in Him, we are to live soberly, indulging neither asceticism nor license, righteously, in whatever relation to others we find ourselves, and godly in speech and behaviour in this present world.

PHILIPPIANS.

Paul wrote the Philippians this letter to thank them for the present they had sent him by the hands of Epaphroditus. Read the first visit of Paul to Philippi as contained in Acts xvi. 12 to 40, where we find Paul, in his path of seeking to save, had to go to a prison to get a convert to the Lord. The Philippian Church seems to have learned the luxury of liberality. Did Lydia and that jailer not lead them on to consideration for Paul in this practical way? "No Church"

had sent money to Paul, but the Philippians, and they had sent "once and again." When Lydia was converted she at once saw the privilege of communicating. "She besought them, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there, and she constrained them." No doubt her efforts had been greatly helped by the keeper of the prison, who is reported, in the kindness of his new-born love, to have washed their stripes. "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God." Faith in God brought salvation, salvation produced liberality, and liberality was accompanied with joy.

While commending them for their liberality, he takes occasion to write a letter on true Christian experience. It is very striking that this letter, which above all letters in the Bible is that on Christian experience, should have liberality as its key-note and occasion. The whole genius of Christianity is "giving." God *gave* His Son for us: we accept Him and then *give* ourselves, our substance, time,

and talents to God and His cause. The world is grasping for gain to self. Paul was sent to prison by the money-loving of the world. Christianity is God's witness to giving.

The word *sin* is not found in all this letter. When a Christian sins he is not manifesting Christianity. Christian experience is not the experience of Christians. The experience of Christians too often allows circumstances to come between them and God. Christian experience is to put God between us and circumstances. The flesh is mentioned in chap. iii. 3, as a thing to be ignored entirely, and when it appears most religious, we are to have no confidence in it.

Paul rejoices in faith that can rise above chains and become "bonds in Christ" to further the gospel in all the palace (i. 13), contentious preachers wishing to add affliction to his bonds are triumphed over by faith (i. 15), faith triumphs over the changes of life and the fear of death, and at the end of the chapter he puts it as a gift to be allowed "to suffer for His sake" (i. 20).

If we see in chapter i. the triumph of faith, we see in chapter ii. Christ in humiliation as our example—in the path of perfect obedience, and holiness, in contrast to the failure of the first Adam, which lead to His exaltation in glory.

In chapter iii., we find Christ's exaltation our aim. In the power of the Divine life we reach onward and upward, aiming at the highest, and never satisfied till we attain it with Himself.

Chap. iv., gives us various practical exhortations connected with Christian experience.

Christian experience is, in the first place,

CHRISTIAN,

that is to say, it springs from our relation to Christ, so the letter begins (i. 6), by looking to the day of Jesus Christ as the perfecting point of the already begun good work. His love for them is (i. 8) in Jesus Christ; (i. 11) the fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ; (i. 13) his bonds are in Christ; his joy was that (i. 18) Christ was preached, and (i. 20) magnified in his body. His life was Christ

(i. 21), his longing (i. 23) was to be with Christ. He longed that their rejoicing should be in Jesus Christ. Their conversation (i. 27) was to be as becometh the gospel of Christ. They were to suffer for Christ (i. 29), and find their consolation in Christ (ii. 1). The same mind of obedience and lowliness was to be in them as in Christ (ii. 5), as the natural mind would in contrast seek to cherish self, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's (ii. 21). The true circumcision are those who rejoice in Christ Jesus (iii. 3). Paul counted all things as loss for Christ (iii. 7). The knowledge of Christ was his ambition (iii. 8); to reach onward to Christ in glory his aim (iii. 14). And he realised that his citizenship was where Christ his Lord and Saviour was, for Whom he was waiting to return in glory (iii. 20). Practically all things were possible for him through Christ (iv. 13); and his parting blessing could rise to no higher height when it reached "God's riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Our Experience.

It is not a thing outside of us, but our

own; and living in Christ, liberal with His liberality, having no confidence in the flesh, our whole path is that of joy. The chronic mourning and sadness of many Christians are a disgrace to our Master. Rejoicing in the Lord is normal Christian experience, but alas! is not the constant experience of Christians, simply because they get away from Christ to the world, the devil, or self. Eighteen times does Paul write in this letter about joy or rejoicing, and he was chained to a soldier in a prison at Rome when he wrote it. I have thought that one of the Philippians at least could appreciate this. That converted and happy keeper of the prison at Philippi, when he heard the letter read, could have said, "That's just like Paul; prisons seem to be turned into worship meetings and temples to him. If you had heard that wonderful happy duet, between Silas and him that night on which I was awakened, you would never have forgotten it. It got my soul and body saved; and he seems to be still the same, for now he writes in the same spirit from his Roman bondage."

Chapter i. 4, his prayers were with joy. That Christ was preached he rejoiced (i. 18). He speaks (i. 25, 26) of their joy of faith, and wishes that it may be more abundant. They were to fulfil his joy (ii. 2) in being like-minded with each other, looking for the joy at the day of Christ (ii. 16-18). He sent Epaphroditus, who had been sick, to give them joy in his recovery. The final exhortation is to rejoice in the Lord alway, and again rejoice—to rejoice not in our joy, not in our experience, not in our salvation, not in our progress, not in our standing, not in our sanctification, but in Christ Jesus (iii. 1-3, iv. 4). He calls them his joy and crown (iv. 1). Their gift to him was a source of joy (iv. 10) in the Lord greatly. And he finishes the letter by an assurance that *his God* would supply all their needs. How entirely faith was conqueror! A prisoner could speak of *his God* as supplying all needs!

There is no word of blame in all this letter. Two ladies (no doubt each very earnest in connection with the present to Paul), Euodias

and Syntyche, are exhorted to be of the same mind in the Lord. Our sisters as well as our brethren in the Lord should see to it that jealousies in the work of the Lord should not come in to mar their single-mindedness. God grant that we may all have more of the liberty, liberality, and joy of the Philippian saints, and more genuine Christian experience.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

Paul's evangelistic efforts at Corinth had been the means of converting a number of people who formed the Church at Corinth, principally Gentiles, who were accustomed to much external evil. (Read Acts xviii.) After he and Apollos had left, several false teachers arose, who seem to have possessed considerable ability to talk, and who tried to undermine Paul's apostolic authority. Judaising apostates on the one hand, and especially licentious rationalistic philosophers on the other, were splitting the congregation into parties, and tolerating, if not even advocating, licentiousness and most unchristian-like behaviour. Paul shows that the active presence

of the Spirit of God alone in their congregation, would give peace, purity, and power.

I. He lays the foundation of all, in showing that Christianity was at every point Divine; and that its central fact, the cross of Christ, put in the dust equally the religiousness of the Jew and the reasoning of the Greek (chap. i.).

II. He vindicates his own apostolic authority, and shows that the whole power to which he trusted was that of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God had revealed to him what God had prepared for those that love Him. He had received not the spirit of the world, but that of God; and his words were those of the Holy Ghost for communicating spiritual benefits (chap. ii.). He had been compelled to be very elementary with them, because they were carnal, and not spiritual (chap. iii.), and the activities of the Spirit with him were his credentials (chap. iv.).

III. He reproves them for what he had heard by report concerning them, showing the responsibility of the congregation of God,

to act with the energy of the Spirit, in putting under discipline those who were immoral. He thus sternly rebukes them for permitting gross fornication (chap. v.), for brother going to law with brother, for covetousness, and other scandalous sins (chap. vi.). In chap. iii. 16, he showed that, in order to their building properly, they were to remember that they were God's temple; in chap. vi. 19, he teaches them that purity of the body was essential, because it was their *body* that was the temple of the Holy Ghost.

IV. He answers questions on points they had asked him about.

1st. On marriage, and the question of the converted slave, finishing the chapter (vii.) by putting all in the light of the Lord's return.

2nd. He answers them as to things offered to idols, by appealing to sanctified common sense (chap. viii.), and again, in chap. ix.; then vindicates his apostolate, and shows the power of grace to advance its rights in order to waive them.

3rd. He counsels them to flee from idolatry,

even to eat and drink to God's glory, and not to give offence to Jew, Gentile, or Church of God (chap. x.).

4th. He gives direction on matters of decency and order in the Church, as to attire, and the proper observance of the Lord's Supper (chap. xi.).

5th. He shows the various gifts of the Spirit, ministrations of the Lord and operations of God in the body, which is essentially one, and mutually helpful (as opposed to the Corinthian party schisms)—(chap. xii.). Parenthetically, in chap. xiii., he shows that love is a more excellent way. Love without manifested gift is better than the best manifestation of gift without love; and in chap. xiv. he shows that the best gift is that which is for edification where the understanding is exercised.

V. He places Christianity as standing or falling with resurrection. Corinthian false teachers had been denying the resurrection. Paul, in chap. xv., places grace and glory in the light of resurrection, coming down from such a lofty height to practical exhortation,

such as conscientiously, individually, systematically, and regularly giving of our substance to the Lord (chap. xvi.). It is unfortunate that chap. xvi. 1, was divided from chap. xv. Many even of God's children rejoice to hear of the sublime saving and sanctifying story of grace and glory, in the light of the resurrection in chap. xv., but rebel against the truth in chap. xvi. :—"Now concerning the collection."

The epistle ends with exhortation and salutation. Chap. xvi. 12 shows that each disciple is responsible to his Lord. Paul greatly desired Apollos to come, "but his will was not at all to come at this time."

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

"God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus ; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me ; so that I rejoiced the more" (chap. vii. 6, 7). This verse may be taken as the occasion

of Paul's writing this second letter to the Corinthians. They had accepted the reproof of Paul, and acted firmly in the question of discipline. Still there were false and suspicious teachers among them, who called in question Paul's apostleship (chap. x. 10). Hence he was compelled to anew put his credentials before them. This letter may be divided into two parts. The first five chapters are more doctrinal, the next four give us the practical application, the last four personal explanations. The first five show us our power; the next four set before us what we are to practise; the last four Paul's apostleship.

I. Our Power (i. to v.).

Our power is Christ, "Who *delivered* us from so great a death, and *doth deliver;* in Whom we trust that He *will* yet *deliver* us" (chap. i. 10). Here we have completed deliverance in the past, continuous deliverance in the present, and contemplated deliverance in the future, taking in the whole sweep of Christ's power for us and in us.

1. Chap. i. gives us our individual and *personal power*, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

2. Chap. ii. shows us the power of life in the *restoration* of him who was under discipline, "in the person (or rather in the presence) of Christ" (ver. 10).

3. Chap. iii. draws a *contrast* between law and life—

Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the *Spirit of the living God.* Our power is in our new life, Christ is our life.

4. Chap. iv. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," that the excellency of *the power* may be of God, and not of us.

5. Chap. v. is the climax of all, giving this life of power, triumphing over the fear of death, and the terror of the Lord in judgment.

Verses 1 to 7 give us the true hope of the Christian, which is not death, but resurrection.

Verses 8 to 13 give us the hindrances which nature would suggest.

Verses 14 to 21 the groundwork of all.

II. Our Practice (vi. to ix.).

1. The Apostle begins this part by showing his own endeavour after consistency as an ambassador of Christ, Whose theme to men is, "Be ye reconciled to God," by *giving no offence in anything*, that the ministry be not blamed (vi. 1 to 13).

2. Chap. vi. 14 to 18. The absurdity of being *yoked* with unbelievers, with the corresponding blessing to the faithful one, who thus comes away from under any yoke with the unconverted.

3. Chap. vii. is a very practical, personal, and comforting exhortation to us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God."

4. Chaps. viii., ix. The very practical and sadly forgotten subject of Christian liberality is fully gone into, and "The fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

III. Paul's Apostleship (x. to xiii.).

1. Chap. x. sets before us his direct *authority* from the Lord: "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (ver. 18).

2. Chap. xi. 1 to 15. He unburdens his heart to the Corinthians, showing his great love towards them, and his anxiety that they should not be "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

3. Chap. xi. 15 to 33. His apostleship is proved by his sufferings for Christ.

4. Chap xii. His apostleship is proved by "visions and revelations of the Lord," which in themselves would produce pride in the flesh, while the power of Christ was manifested through his infirmities.

5. Chap. xiii. His apostleship is proved by the certainty of their own salvation. Far from the exhortations in verse 5, "Examine yourselves," being intended to make us doubt our salvation, the whole force of the argument is lost if uncertainty is thought of. Read the context, verse 3, "Since ye seek a proof of

Christ speaking in me . . . examine yourselves." Why, your own conversion proves that I came from Christ. The usual salutations close the letter, "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

This is supposed to be the first letter Paul wrote. Read Acts xvii. 1–15, which gives the account of the foundation of this Gentile Church. It was proper that the Gentile apostle should write first to a place where the Gentile converts were greatly in the majority. He gives proper proofs of the Divinity of their new religion with fitting warnings and encouragements. "The living God" is brought before those who had formerly worshipped dead idols. The Thessalonians were in trial, hence their eyes are lifted up to the future bright glory that we wait for. In the first letter we have the *coming of the Lord* for His saints; in the second the *day*

of the Lord in judgment. Not seeing this difference has led to much confusion. We wait for the coming of the Lord, not for the day of the Lord. We have to wait for nothing whatever between us and the coming of the Lord. Scripture is explicit on many things that have to be accomplished before the day of the Lord. The coming of the Lord was revealed to Paul as a special revelation ("This we say unto you *by the word of the Lord*"); and never before do we get a hint of people being caught up to meet Christ in the air. The day of the Lord, on the other hand, is very fully revealed in the Old Testament and Gospels with the great judgments that go before and bring it in. These young Thessalonian converts had to be set right on both these heads. The first letter dispels a fear, that should a believer die, he will not share in the *coming of the Lord*. The second does away with the thought—that we of this dispensation will share in the judgments of the *day of the Lord*. All saints, dead as well as living, will share in the coming of the Lord. All of us up to the

coming of the Lord, living as well as dead, will be saved from the great tribulation.

In 1 Thessalonians each chapter ends with the coming of the Lord, and is a summing up of the teaching it contains.

Chap. i. We are *converted*, to wait for God's Son from heaven (vers. 9, 10).

Chap. ii. Our *hope*, our joy, and crown, are all reserved for that glorious advent (ver. 19).

Chap. iii. We are established in *holiness* in the prospect of that great event (ver. 13). Why is this so little used? We hear much about consecration and holiness; why so little upon this great means of practical separation from the world? "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3).

Chap. iv. The special revelation, that we are not as Jews to wait for Christ to come to the Mount of Olives, but are to be caught up to meet Him in His kingly triumph-march, is here given (vers. 15–17). The difference between "the air" and "the Mount of Olives," if not seen, makes an entire fog in all the Divine future; if seen,

it helps greatly to clear difficulties. In this chapter His coming is to give us *comfort* as regards the dead in Christ.

Chap. v. 23 puts the coming of our Lord in connection with our entire sanctification, and (for the prayer has two parts) our spirit, soul and body, being preserved blameless.

"Lord Jesus, come!
From idols turned, in grace (1 Thess. i.)
We seek our Father's face;
We serve Him by His Spirit given;
We wait for Thee, our Lord from heaven.
Lord Jesus, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!
Our hope, our joy, our crown (1 Thess. ii.),
Our glory and renown;
Our hearts unblameable do Thou
In holiness establish now (1 Thess. iii. and v.).
Lord Jesus, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!
The comfort of Thine own (1 Thess. iv.),
To claim Thy rightful throne;
Thy sleeping saints to raise, then we
Who live, from earth caught up shall be.
Lord Jesus, come!"

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

In chap. v. of his first letter Paul had mentioned the "day of the Lord" as a theme

with which the Thessalonians ought to be well acquainted, in contrast to the "coming of the Lord," which he specially revealed in chapter iv. The "coming of the Lord" is the hope of the believer; "the day of the Lord" is the time of His dealing in judgment with the world; and, when this "day of the Lord" comes, it is as a thief in the night to an unready world, and "*they* shall say, Peace, and Safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." The Old Testament predicts many awful judgments connected with this day; and some false teachers had pretended that Paul taught, or had perverted the truth of his former letter so as to make it out, that that day had already begun with all its dismal horrors, in the difficulties in which they then found themselves. Paul writes to correct this false impression. In his first letter he had showed that the saints who had fallen asleep in Christ would share in the "coming of the Lord." In his second he shows that the saints who are alive shall not be over taken by the judgments of the "day of the Lord."

Nothing necessarily lies between the believer of every age and the "coming of the Lord;" many events lie before "the day of the Lord."

Chap. i. He gives thanks to God and comfort to the Thessalonians. The Apostle shows the twofold aspect of the return of our Lord. It has righteous vengeance on all those who know not God (Gentiles), and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jews); but there is nothing but rest for all His own when He is revealed from heaven. Through tribulation we may have to pass to the kingdom, but not the tribulations of the day of the Lord.

Chap. ii. The error concerning "the day of the Lord" is corrected, and the relative positions of "the coming" and "the day" marked out. False teachers were trying to shake them in mind and trouble them by terror, whereas we are cheered by hope. Then he turned their eyes to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him. This is our proper hope. This is our immediate hope. Let

us take an illustration. Let us suppose that London was in rebellion at the advent of the Prince of Wales to the throne. He was in a foreign land, and was on his march with his armies to quell the rebellion and claim his rightful throne. He sends a message that fearful desolation will be the result of his siege of the capital. Those who are loyal are shaken and troubled lest they should be in the carnage. But he writes again, "Never fear, you that are loyal, I shall gather you all out to myself whenever I arrive at Dover, and you shall join me on my royal, conquering way." Such is the triumphal march of our Captain. Before the day of His vengeance dawns we shall have been gathered together to Him, according to 1 Thess. iv.

Ver. 2 of chapter ii. should read thus, "As that the day of the Lord *has come*." Far from meaning "at hand," it is the ordinary Greek word for being *present*, as contrasted with the future, however near. It is used in Rom. viii. 38 for "things present" as contrasted with "things to come." They

feared that "the day of the Lord" had actually begun. Most expositors have confounded "the coming" and "the day" just as these Thessalonians, and have thus made it out that Paul was wanting them to look to events to happen in the second letter as he interposed nothing between in his first! There is nothing necessarily between us and the coming of our Lord. There are here specified three things between the world and the day of the Lord.

1st. The apostasy.

2nd. The leader of the apostasy, the man of sin.

3rd. The withdrawal of a power, principle, or person from the scene, that is opposed to this man of sin, and restrains his acting (ii. 3-9).

The order seems very clear. The mystery of iniquity then working in the apostles' days would go on till it developed into apostasy. Then the restraining one would be withdrawn. (Who this is, is not mentioned—the Church, by the presence of the Holy Ghost, is the salt of the earth, and we shall be

caught up to meet the Lord in the air before the day of the Lord). Then the wicked one shall be revealed, and lastly, the Lord shall destroy him by His coming. This clearly explodes the notion that the world is to be converted before Christ's coming. An odd millennium it would be with the man of sin going through it, and being overthrown at the end. Thus Christ comes, first, to call out His faithful ones, then to destroy the man of sin, and set up His kingdom in glory and power. This is our good hope through grace (not to be justified, but to be waiting for the Lord). Therefore we are to stand fast and have our hearts comforted and stablished in every good word and work.

Chap. iii. He values their prayers, urges them to pray for him, as he desires all good for them, that they should be faithful, and avoid the disorderly; and still he keeps in view his theme as he shows the practical power of the coming of the Lord, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." Thus we have in

Chap. i. The bearing of Christ's return on the destiny of saved and lost.

Chap. ii. The difference between "our gathering together unto Christ," and "the day of the Lord."

Chap. iii. The practical power of His return over His own.

PAUL'S LETTERS TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS.

Having looked at Paul's letters to congregations, we now pass on to consider those addressed to individuals. There are four of them—two to Timothy, one to Titus, and one to Philemon. In those to Timothy and Titus we find God spoken of as our Saviour, and godliness as manifested in the walk of believers on the earth.

God Our Saviour.

Paul was an apostle by the commandment of God our Saviour (1 Tim. i. 1). We are shown what is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (ii. 3). He is the Saviour (providentially, or preserver) of all, especially believers (iv. 10). Thus a believing woman is preserved in child-bearing (ii. 15). Timothy would save himself, and those who heard him (iv. 16). Our Saviour Jesus Christ has abolished death (2 Tim. i. 10). The elect

are to obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus (ii. 10). The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation. The Word through preaching was committed to Paul by the commandment of God our Saviour (Tit. i. 3). The salutation is from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour (i. 4). Slaves were to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (ii. 10). We are to be looking for the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (ii. 13). It is the kindness and love of God our Saviour that has washed and renewed us (iii. 4), as the Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour (iii. 6).

Godliness.

As men of God (1 Tim. vi. 11) we are to manifest God on the earth. We pray for kings, that our lives may be spent in all godliness (ii. 2). The congregation of believers is to witness on earth for the mystery of godliness (iii. 16). Timothy is exhorted to exercise himself in godliness (iv. 7), and this godliness is profitable unto all things,

having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (iv. 8). Piety was to be shown at home by Christians providing for their own, as this was acceptable to God (v. 4). The doctrine of Christ is according to godliness (vi. 3). Perverse men were making gain godliness, whereas godliness with contentment is great gain (vi. 5, 6). The man of God is to follow godliness (vi. 11). We are to turn away from those who have a form of godliness, but deny its power (2 Tim. iii. 5). All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Paul begins the letter to Titus (i. 1) with the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness, and in his statement of the Divine plan of salvation in ii. 12, we are told that grace teaches believers to walk godly, as well as soberly and righteously, in this present world.

Writing, as Paul was, to the two young ministers who were designed to carry on the work of soul-saving, saint-edifying, and right-ordering of congregations begun by the apostles, we find, very appropriately, many

exhortations. In 1 Timothy we find Paul charging Timothy to see that sound doctrine was taught, and he gives him the qualifications for those that were to be office-bearers in the congregation, elders (or bishops) to look after the spiritual affairs, and deacons to look after the money.

In 2 Timothy Paul charges him to stir up the gift which was in him, and Titus is charged to see that the congregations that had not officers, being out of order, should be set in order, and every city should thus have its elders. With apostles alive, God saw fit to have elders appointed. To say that congregations ought to have other officers than elders or deacons, or to say that they ought to do without them, may be a better or a worse method than that of Scripture; we think it safest to go by God's order. The truth is, that the flesh, on the one side, seeks for pomposity and a marvellous array of gradations of officialism, or, on the other side, cannot do with official rule at all, having neither head nor heart for rule, and so rejects what God has appointed. Of course, human

cleverness will soon get arguments for either course; and thus we are told that elders were only for apostles' times. Instead of which, they were to act when apostles had gone (see Paul to the elders at Ephesus). In fact, elders were before apostles, and having answered in the Old Testament congregations, the Holy Ghost instituted them in the New, just as the bread and wine of the passover were brought to the Lord's Supper. Peter tells us that apostles were elders. In ordinary congregational work they acted as the body of elders with others not apostles. Paul makes clear that the supernatural gift he conferred on Timothy as an apostle was from him as an individual, and not from the elderhood—the apostles and others gathered as elders. The gift was "by" (διά) the putting on of Paul's hands—and has nothing to do with office, or, as it were, making Timothy and Titus semi-apostles. The gift was only "with" (μετά) the laying on of the hands of the elderhood.

It is not revealed how long an interval there was between the writing of the two

letters to Timothy. Bagster's Bible puts down 65 A.D. for 1 Tim., and 66 A.D. for 2 Tim., others put up to ten years. In both epistles we find Paul anticipating disorder. It has sometimes been said that the first letter was the path of faith when the congregation was in order, and the second was for a time of disorder. Paul does not say this; and we find order and disorder in each. In 1 Tim. i. 6, some had swerved from the faith, desiring "to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Then, if we have Hymenæus and Philetus in the second, we have Hymenæus and Alexander in the first letter (i. 20), who had made shipwreck of faith, and who were delivered over to Satan. Then he warns about those who should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (iv. i.); also some are already turned aside after Satan (v. 15), and if cautioned to keep away from ritualistic theologians in the second letter, he is to avoid profane and vain babbling, and oppositions of science falsely so called in the

first (vi. 20), which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

We have here a charge given to Timothy to see that sound doctrine was preached, and he is instructed what qualifications were necessary for the rulers of the Church, elders and deacons, who, far from ceasing when apostles ceased, as some teach, were to take their place "after their departing" (Acts xx.).

Chap. i. *The charge delivered to Timothy.* The end of this charge "is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (ver. 5). The time for the exercise of this charge was a time of warfare. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before unto thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare."

Chap. ii. *An exhortation to prayer.* Prayer is to be made *for* all men. Prayer is to be offered *by* men in all places. But women are to keep silence in public or with men, and this is put on the ground of Crea-

tion and the Fall. Eve was created after Adam, and Eve was deceived.

Chap. iii. *Qualifications for the office-bearers of the congregation.* Qualifications are not laid down in connection with gifts, as these are proved by their exercise. A man may have a certain gift, but suppose he has an unruled house, he has not the qualification for being an elder. Hence the qualifications are here given by which congregations may recognise officers. There are only two kinds of rulers recognised in Scripture as being in the congregation. These are elders (or bishops, these being identical, ver. 1–7), to look after spiritual affairs; and deacons (ver. 8–13), to look after the money of the congregation. The Apostle links these orderly arrangements with the very kernel truths of Christianity. When these instructions about officers are being carried out, it it spoken of by the Apostle as good behaviour in the congregation of God, which exists to manifest and maintain truth in the earth.

Chap. iv. *Departure from the faith predicted.* Timothy is instructed, as "a good

minister of Jesus Christ," how to behave with regard to such as seem even more spiritual than what Christianity demands. The number of exhortations given to Timothy is very remarkable—Command, teach, be an example, read, preach, meditate, take heed.

Chap. v. *Various duties detailed.* To old and young, to widows, elders ruling well, and the duties of a good minister, duties, with regard to elders, discipline, and himself.

Chap. vi. Further directions for ministerial works. Directions as to servants and evil teachers, exhortations to contentment, and, as a man of God, Timothy is cautioned to shun all the lawless; and Paul again repeats his charge to "keep this commandment *until* the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and an exhortation concerning the rich, with a final word of warning to himself.

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith."

SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

The Apostle Paul, in prospect of his removal from earth, and the scene of his active labours among the saints of God, exhorts Timothy with great love and faithfulness, telling him what he may expect in opposition to the truth of God, both from the godless without, and more especially from professors of Christianity. This second letter to Timothy is thus a charge of the Apostle to Timothy to stir up the gift that he had, and labour as to God when Paul was removed and opposition rampant.

Mark how very often Timothy is exhorted. May these exhortations not be very properly called

Precepts for Young Preachers.

"Stir up the Gift of God which is in thee."

"Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord."

"Hold fast the form of sound words."

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

"Commit what thou hast heard to faithful men."

"Endure hardness."

"Consider what I say."

"Remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead."

"Put them in remembrance."

"Study to show thyself approved of God."

"Shun profane and vain babblings."

"Flee youthful lusts."

"Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace."

"Avoid foolish and unlearned questions."

"Turn away from such as have a form of godliness, denying the power thereof."

"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned."

"Preach the Word."

"Be instant in season, out of season."

"Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

"Watch thou in all things."

"Endure afflictions."

"Do the work of an evangelist."

"Make full proof of thy ministry."

"Be thou ware also."

Let us now look at this letter as Paul delivering

A Charge to a Young Minister.

This charge of the Apostle's to Timothy related to

Chap. i. *The Apostle's own experience.* The gift when spoken of in the first epistle (iv. 14) was said to be *along with* the laying on of the hands of the elders, the permanent officers of the Church. Here (1–6) it is *by* the putting on of the hands of the Apostle. Thus we have its two aspects; that which was solely apostolic, miraculous, and temporary; and that which was by the elders and ordinary, and to be used in all circumstances of the Church of God. Paul refers to the godliness of his own forefathers, as also that of the mother and grandmother of Timothy. Grace does not necessarily run in families, as each child has to be personally born again, but the family is God's own institution for training young recruits for His army.

Paul spoke of his own experience in the first letter as of one who had taken the place of the chief of sinners, and there found Jesus Christ the great Saviour, Who had saved him, and put him into the ministry. Here he speaks of Christ as the One Whom he had known through all dangers, trials, and opposition, and the One to Whom he had committed all against that day. He finishes the first chapter by a grateful remembrance of the house of Onesiphorus, who had stood by him on several occasions. In the midst of all the opposition there is to be found even one human heart at times open for sympathy and help.

The charge connected with

Chap. ii. *Personal qualifications.* He is to be strong and patient. He is to take every means to teach the truth to others and see that it is taught. He is to shun profane and vain babblings from without, and flee youthful lusts from within. Hymenæus and Alexander in the first letter were referred to as having made shipwreck concerning faith. Hymenæus and Philetus are here referred to

as denying the resurrection, or saying that it is past. Just as some in the Thessalonian Church were frightening young disciples that they were already in the tribulations of the day of the Lord, so Hymenæus and Philetus were lulling others to sleep by saying that the resurrection was past. Such profane and vain babblings of rationalistic professors show the vessels of dishonour in a large house, and from all such, wise in their own conceit, instead of attempting to instruct them (their will being involved), we are to purge ourselves from them so as to be vessels that the Master can use.

He is exhorted to be gentle, apt to teach, and forbearing, "in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." What a model of a Christian minister! Mark, the devil is to be resisted, and if so will flee from us, not so youthful lusts; we are to flee from them. Ponder this, young servants of the one Master.

The charge of the Apostle is shown

Chap. iii. *Related to perilous times.* These times are characterised by men who

have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it. They resist the truth, and are of corrupt minds. The provision of the Apostle is twofold: the living example of the Apostle, and the unerring Scripture. It is very cheering to a young soldier to see the calm, unflinching courage of an old veteran in the midst of the hottest fight, and it is no good sign in young disciples when they can think or talk lightly of the old soldiers or grey haired Christians. "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions." As we see the old saint laying aside his sword and helmet and breast-plate, with many a notch on the sword, many a blow on the helmet, and many a thrust mark on the breast-plate, but the face unruffled, and lighted up with a calm and heavenly joy, are we not to take fresh courage as we hear of the wicked men and seducers waxing worse and worse, and the truth of God assailed, and grasping the banner and the sword with holy faith, and calm resolution, be prepared for anything that may come?

But above and beyond all this we have the God-breathed Scripture, which is our strength and protection under all possible circumstances, profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The charge is here seen in the light of

Chap. iv. *Paul's departure.* He gives him solemn warning and sympathising comfort. He warns him solemnly, as one just treading the verge of another world, whose eyes will so soon behold the glory, whose fight was over, and who was ready to be offered, that he has to do with heaven and God and eternity, with the Judge of quick and dead, at His appearing in glory to reward publicly His own, and to set up His kingdom, a reign of righteousness on this earth. But while warning him and showing the changeable character of some, he comforts him by pointing to the faithfulness of others, and amid all, "the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." The greatness of the revelation of God is seen in the

details to which it extends, in looking after an apostle's scanty property, cloak, books, and parchments. Was this parchment, for which he was so anxious, not the Old Testament scroll that he had studied to so good purpose?

Notice how the Word of God is to be used in these times of peril and unbelief, when men "will not endure sound doctrine." Are we not in the very midst of these times? Preachers and teachers professedly Christians are endeavouring to see how little of God is in the Bible, and endeavouring to file down the edge of the sword of the Spirit by their own reason, research, or rebellion. The ruin of man, the atonement, the inspiration of Scripture, and the eternity of punishment are all explained away or denied; and this sometimes by men who are acknowledged as Christian teachers. Then the great mass of professing Christians demand to be pleased, and the demand creates the supply. They desire culture, eloquence, pleasing doctrines, soothing sentences, statements that put them in conceit with themselves, and puff up the

possibilities of humanity, and they get it. They will not endure *sound* doctrine. Ruin, redemption, and regeneration are not to be heard of in nineteenth century culture. Their ears itch for some new sensation, a straw to tickle them, and alas! they find men who (instead of acting as ambassadors of God, standing on the eternal verities, proclaiming unflinchingly God's own sound doctrine, whether men hear or forbear) stoop down to become ear-ticklers, to pick up and employ the most recent novelty in straws, whether of imagination or culture, whether of the æsthetics as represented in the various new things in religious millinery and gymnastics, or of the latest crazes in men's wild guesses as to the doctrines or revelations of God.

In every chapter of 2 Timothy the Word of God is pressed home. "Hold fast the form of sound words" (i. 13). "The acknowledging of the truth" (ii. 5). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . . . That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (iii. 16, 17). "Preach the Word" (iv. 2).

PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS.

Timothy was the son of a Jewess, a godly woman called Eunice, who also had a godly training under her mother, Lois. Titus, on the other hand, was a Gentile (Gal. ii. 3), a Greek, and nothing is said about his parents. Both were converted under Paul's ministry, and these two young men, as specimens of converts from Jews and Gentiles, are trained by Paul for the work of the ministry in the Church of God, and shown how to conduct the affairs of the Church after the apostles are gone. In these early days, with few labourers, the apostles and others could not wait sufficiently long in a place to put everything in order among the young converts, who were left to themselves. Thus they suffered from being without official rulers, not knowing the necessary qualifications, and, moreover, it took some time to develop rulers among them. But Paul calls this a disorderly state of things; and thus Titus is left in Crete to set right what remained in confusion, and establish elders in every city.

Official elders were the only and universal rulers in spiritual matters in the Churches. They were for every city, every Church, and every age. Hence their qualifications are most fully given.

Chap. i. They are to be *officially recognised*, in order to stop the mouths of the unruly, and, with the authority of the whole congregation, are sharply to rebuke those that require it. *Bishop* and *elder* are identical. Every bishop is an elder, and every elder a bishop. This is proved in vers. 5 and 7: "To ordain *elders*, . . . for a *bishop* must be blameless." He is an elder, not a novice, as to his condition; he is a *bishop* or overseer as to his rule and oversight.

Chap. ii. to iii. 8. Titus is expected to give *instructions to Christians.*

The *aged* are exhorted in vers. 2 to 5.

The *young*, vers. 6 to 8.

Servants, vers. 9 to 14, in which the apostle gives us the very kernel of the gospel (vers. 11, 13). It is remarkable that some of the most wondrous truths are revealed when the Holy Ghost is at the lowest

lines of society. When exhorting slaves, He reveals the whole gospel scheme in the most concise form found in all revelation. Slaves had little time or inclination for deep study, so a single sentence is given containing all the gospel of the grace of God, past, present, or to come. 1st, The salvation which the grace of God brings; 2nd, The lessons which the grace of God teaches; and 3rd, The hope of the future, which the grace of God gives. And with all the authority of an ambassador from God, Titus, as a sample of all ministers of the Word, even the youngest in all ages, who wish to bring in or maintain order in the Church of God, and speak the things which become sound doctrine, hears the Divine word, "Let no man despise thee."

Subjects are next to be exhorted to be subject to principalities and powers; not because they are good, but simply because they are there. Nero was to be obeyed just as Queen Victoria till conscience was outraged; and what then? suffer for it. If this "subject" aspect of Christians in the world had been always remembered and acted on, the

Christian's testimony would have been much more manifest, the Christian's separation much more plainly marked, and the Christian's path much more joyous.

Chap. iii. 9 to the end. *Difficulties* are anticipated and met. Foolish questions are to be avoided, and heretics are to be rejected. Any one holding doctrines inconsistent with Christianity, of course, has no right to be within its pale. "Heretic" and "rejected" have both been stretched by men to their utmost limits. Heretics have come to mean with some, "all that believe differently from me." "Rejected," with some mean burned or persecuted. Scripture is plain. Those who believe doctrines inconsistent with salvation, or that lead to evil practice, are to be put under discipline—that is to say, prohibited from the privileges of the Church of God. This short letter thus gives us three things that a young minister should look closely after—

1st, An orderly Church.

2nd, An exhorted Church.

3rd A pure Church.

PHILEMON.

The letters to the two young ministers, Timothy and Titus, have to do with the doctrine and rightly ordering of the Church. This short letter to Philemon gives us a glimpse of how Christianity affects us in the ordinary affairs of our life, coming down even to the smallest matters. Paul had been the means of the conversion of Philemon. Philemon had a servant called Onesimus, whom he treated very kindly. Onesimus, like many more, would not be content with the things which he had, and did not know when he had a good master. He robbed Philemon, and ran off. But God's eye was on him. God can overtake a runaway thief and make him the occasion of an inspired letter, to teach us that Christianity makes its subjects true gentlemen, and men energised with the highest principles, coming into action in the smallest details, in consideration of others. God led Onesimus to the Apostle Paul. Paul took pains with this runaway, taught him the gospel, and the thief became converted.

At peace with God, he must now be at peace with men. He had grossly wronged Philemon. He was penniless, but Paul the aged, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, with not too much wealth, became his surety. He writes to Philemon to receive back his servant, and to look to Paul for payment of his money lost by Onesimus—although in passing, he shows that as he had been the means of the conversion of Philemon, all that Philemon had Paul had a claim upon, as he had a claim on Philemon himself. Paul would have kept Onesimus as a very useful servant during his imprisonment, but thought it right that the new relations between Philemon and Onesimus should be established, and the old disgrace wiped out. The Apostle ends by asking a favour, that Philemon would provide him a lodging, as he expected to get out of prison by the prayers of the saints.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

We have been considering Paul's letters to Churches and individuals. We come now to study his letter to the Hebrews. We call it his letter, although Scripture attaches no name to it; and since this is so, we can have no absolute certainty who wrote it. We believe from internal evidence that it was Paul who wrote the letter; but the Holy Ghost had no doubt a purpose in keeping back the name of the writer. This letter, more than any, asks us to lift up our eyes from everything to Jesus only. In this letter alone (iii. 1) Jesus is called "the Apostle;" and since in a peculiar way God is here speaking by His Son, is there not a Divine propriety in the name of the human writer being withheld? This is a letter full of contrasts, to teach the Jews who had professed Christianity how the Jewish system had vanished, and was now eclipsed by Christianity.

The glory of all that had gone before is allowed only to be *eclipsed* by a brighter glory.

They had good things in the old system, everything is *better* now.

They had the imperfect shadow, they have now the perfect substance.

They had earthly blessings in the land of Canaan, here all is *heavenly.*

They had temporal and temporary arrangements of old, here all is *eternal.*

1. *The old eclipsed.*

ANGELS are ministering spirits, excelling in strength, and yielding perfect obedience; but God never said to them, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

MOSES was faithful in all the house as a servant, but Christ is a Son over His own house (iii. 5).

JOSHUA led them faithfully over Jordan into the Canaan possession; but this was not rest, for Christ alone could bring in the earth's true Sabbath (iv).

AARON was a priest called of God, but his priesthood ended; Christ is a Priest for ever.

They truly were many priests because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but "this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchanging priesthood" (vii. 24).

MINISTRY of the sanctuary was carefully performed of old; but He hath obtained a more excellent ministry in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man (viii.).

COVENANT was made with the fathers in the day that Jehovah took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. This they broke, but Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant (viii.).

THE TABERNACLE, with its courts, divisions, furniture, and services, was planned by God Himself; but Christ is a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle (ix.).

BLOOD of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; but Christ with His own blood has entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal

redemption, and the blood of His spotless sacrifice can now purge the conscience of the sinner (ix. 14).

The Holiest Place of the tabernacle was entered by the high priest on earth once a year; but Christ is now entered into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us (ix. 24).

Yearly presentation of the blood was required of old; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (ix. 26).

Daily every priest stood ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifice, which can never take away sins; but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right hand of God as to all questions of sacrifice (x. 12).

Witnesses have borne testimony to the Divine character and heavenly termination of a life of faith, in that Westminster Abbey of Scripture (xi.); but we are asked to look away from all these to the only perfectly faithful witness, Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. All failed but the perfect Jesus,

Who began the race in faith, ended in faith, and was faithful from beginning to end (xii. 2).

JUDGMENT spoke wrath to a sinner disobedient in one point, but we are come to grace, even to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

2. *All is better.*

The law had a shadow of good things; but the substance, which is so much better, is now come. Moses gave us the patterns of the heavenly things, Jesus gives us the heavenly things themselves. Hence the absurdity and degradation of Ritualism, which is but an absurd Gentile return to an inferior Judaism than that set aside in this epistle. What would we say to an architect who asked us to be satisfied with the plan of a house when the house itself was built! Shall we go back to the shadow when the substance has come?

The *Son of God* being made so much better than the angels, as He hath obtained a more excellent name than they (i. 4).

The Apostle expected from those who had embraced *Christianity* better things—things that accompany salvation (vi. 9).

Melchizedec blessed Abraham, and as Christ is of the order of this royal priest, He is greater than Abraham, as the less is blessed of the better (vii. 7).

We have a better *hope* (vii. 19).

A better *testament* (or covenant) (vii. 22, and viii. 6).

Better *promises* (viii. 6).

Better *sacrifices* (ix. 23).

Better *substance* in heaven (x. 34).

A better *country* (xi. 16).

A better *resurrection* (xi. 35).

Some better *thing* for us than for the worthies of old (xi. 40), while we have much identical and much similar; we have also what is better than they had.

Christ's *blood* speaks better things than that of Abel (xii. 24).

3. *All is perfect.*

The *Captain* of our salvation has been made perfect through sufferings (ii. 10).

The Son learned obedience by the things

which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation (v. 9).

Those *skilled* in the word of righteousness are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (v. 14).

We are *exhorted* to go on to perfection (vi. 1).

Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection, but our Priest did (vii. 11).

The *law* made nothing perfect, hence that dispensation is set aside (vii. 19).

The word of the *oath*, which was since the law, maketh the Son, Who is perfected for evermore (vii. 28).

The *conscience* could not be perfect under a repeated sacrifice (ix. 9).

Our *tabernacle* is more perfect (ix. 11).

The *sanctified* have been perfected for ever by one offering (x. 14).

New Testament saints perfect the Old (xi. 40).

Jesus is the Perfecter of faith—He finished His course in faith (xii. 2).

The spirits of *just* men made perfect is the company to which we have come.

4. *All is heavenly.*

As the pattern was inferior to the reality, so it was visible to the eye of sense, as the reality is now seen only to faith. So the scene on which the former was displayed was earth, the reality is heavenly. Not only is the earth the Lord's, but

The *heavens* are the work of His hands (i. 10). Consistent with this,

We are partakers of the *heavenly* calling (iii. 1).

Our High Priest has entered into the *heavens* (iv. 14).

We have tasted the *heavenly* gift; not merely the Messiah on earth, but Christ raised and seated in heaven, and preached as such on the earth (vi. 4).

Our High Priest has been made higher than the *heavens* (vii. 26).

And as such, is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the *heavens* (viii. 1).

The Jewish priests serve unto the example and shadow of *heavenly* things (viii. 5).

We have the *heavenly* things themselves (ix. 23).

As Christ has gone into *heaven* itself (ix. 24),

Our better and enduring substance is not liable to be lost on earth, for it is in *heaven* (x. 34).

Faith's eye is fixed on a *heavenly* country (xi. 16).

We are come to a *heavenly* Jerusalem (xii. 22).

The names of the Church of the firstborn are written in *heaven* (xii. 23).

And the solemnity of the warnings is intensified by the fact that God speaks from *heaven* (xii. 25),

And that He is about to shake the *heaven* (xii. 26).

We have thus seen that Christianity is better in quality than Judaism is, heavenly and visible only to faith in its peculiar blessings, so it brings in the eternal as contrasted with the temporal arrangements of a nation.

5. *All is eternal.*

The *throne* of the Son is eternal (i. 8).

Our *Priest* is eternal (v. 6; vi. 20; vii. 17, 21, 24, 28).

Salvation is not merely from Egypt or from temporal foes, but Christ is now the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him (v. 9).

Judgment is eternal (vi. 2).

Redemption, which He hath obtained for us, is eternal (ix. 12).

The Spirit through Whom He offered Himself without spot to God is eternal (ix. 14).

Our *inheritance* is eternal (ix. 15).

The *covenant* is eternal (xiii. 20).

Jesus Christ amid all our changes is eternally *unchanged* (xiii. 8).

The *glory* to Him shall be eternal (xiii. 21).

We have other two characteristics very strongly marked in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In Judaism the high priest could never sit down because his work was never finished, and he had over and over again to offer the same sacrifice. His work was never

finished, and, moreover, could not be finished, seeing that it was the same work performed over and over again, pointing forward to the work of the Messiah. Thus the high priest of Old Testament days could not sit down, but our High Priest, having finished the work for ever, is seated. The high priest of old repeated his work, our High Priest has perfected it once for all. Thus we find *seated* and *once* are frequently mentioned.

6. *Seated.*

"The Son, when He had by Himself *purged our sins*, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (i. 3).

"We have such an *High Priest*, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens" (viii. 1).

"Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this Man, after he had offered *one sacrifice* for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (x. 11, 12).

"Looking unto Jesus *the Author and Finisher of faith;* Who for the joy that

was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (xii. 2). Thus, as the purger of sins, the High Priest, the sacrifice, and example, all is completed, and He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, the majesty of Heaven.

7. *Once.*

"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (vii. 27).

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (ix. 12).

"Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (ix. 26).

"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (ix. 27, 28).

"The worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sin" (x. 2).

"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (x. 10).

FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

The key to this epistle may be the following, "Which thing is true in Him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth" (ii. 8). Romans gives us man brought from his degradation to walk before God; John gives us God brought from His throne to walk before men. In the Gospel this is seen in perfection in the person of Christ and in the Epistles imperfectly in the numerous sons of God saved by His grace. God has never been seen, and the Gospel of John gives us one revelation of Him and the Epistles another; because what was true of Christ on the earth is true in us now as His witnesses. So in the Gospel, "No man hath seen God at any time," but the revelation is, "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," and in the Epistle, since the Witness has been rejected; "No man hath seen God at any time;" and the witness

now is, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us" (iv. 12). Thus we walk now before men as the manifestation of God in His love, in His light, and in His life.

The Gnostics had begun to disturb the Church of God with their professed knowledge, derived from their own speculations. John writes to show whence the true knowledge comes, what the true knowledge is, and what the true knowledge produces. Fifteen times does he use one word for "know" (εἰδέω), twenty-three times another (γινώσκω).

John wrote this letter not to any Church, but to the whole mass of believers as the children of God. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake;" and then addresses all such under these three headings of experience —fathers, young men, and babes—"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth."

The purpose which the Holy Ghost had in view in writing this letter is told in it.

1. These things write we unto you, that your *joy* may be full (i. 4).

2. These things write I unto you, that ye *sin not* (ii. 1).

3. I write no new commandment unto you, but an *old commandment* (ii. 7).

4. Again, a *new commandment* I write unto you (ii. 8).

5. These things have I written unto you, concerning them that *seduce* you (ii. 26).

6. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have *eternal life.*

Joy, holiness, obedience, faithfulness, and eternal life, are the burden of the letter; all these are seen in perfection in Christ—Him Who was from the beginning.

The subject of this epistle may be said to be eternal life, seen on this earth in the sons of God, walking in heavenly light and manifesting Divine love.

Chap. i. The *manifestation* and origin of this is in the Word of Life—Christ Himself and our fellowship in this with the Father, the Son, and each other.

A *message* to exhibit the atmosphere in which this life exists. It is not in darkness total (Gentile), or partial (Jewish), but in the very light of heaven. "God is light." No question unasked or unanswered. Everything is seen in its true colour. Our *walk* is there, else we lie; our *fellowship* is there with all the fellow-sons; our *sins* are detected and forgiven, and our *truthfulness* accords with that light.

Chap. ii. The characteristics of eternal life as seen in the family.

Our aim is "sin not"; our advocate Jesus Christ the righteous; our rule, obedience as in Christ, keeping His word, and our walk is in love.

Exhortations are given to all the possessors of eternal life under the headings of fathers, young men, and babes.

Chap. iii. Difference between the possessors of eternal life and the children of the devil. The children of God do not practise sin, but practise righteousness, love one another, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in them. The children of the devil, the only

other family treading this earth, are characterised by the opposites to these—each being characterised, not by circumstances, but by a nature peculiar to each. A child of God manifests Christ's life here just as a sheep feeds on grass, while a pig wallows in the mire.

Chap. iv. contains to the children marks by which they may know spirits whether they are of God.

1st. They confess the person of Jesus Christ come in the flesh.

2nd. They bow to the Word of God.

3rd. They manifest the love of God.

This love is not human, earthly, nor temporal, but Divine, heavenly, and eternal, sent down from God in Christ, giving us life linked with propitiation, life preserved by an indwelling spirit, and a life that is as Christ is, and bold for the day of judgment.

Chap. v. Witnesses to this life—

1st. Jesus Christ coming by water and blood, and the Spirit bearing witness. We have in this eternal life moral cleansing, vicarious atonement, and Divine power.

These are the water, the blood, and the spirit.

In chap ii. 12 and 28, the word "children" includes all the family of God; in ii. 13 and 18, they are babes in the family.

Chap. iii. 2, "It doth not yet appear;" that is, it is not yet manifested to the world, for we know that we shall be like Him.

Chap. iii. 4, "Sin is transgression of the law" should be "sin is lawlessness."

Chap. iv. 6, "Heareth us," *i.e.*, inspired writers.

Chap. v. 7 was not written by the Apostle John, and should not appear in our Bibles. The doctrine of the Trinity is too clearly proved in Scripture to require false help.

Mark how thoroughly this letter, as well as the Gospel, overthrows the doctrine of the non-eternity of punishment, and exposes the utter shallowness of those who confound "eternal life" with "eternal existence." Scripture as with a sunbeam shows that the punishment of the wicked is eternal existence under the wrath of God. Scripture shows us that "eternal life" has its sphere and its

nature in eternal light and love, obedience and righteousness.

The whole doctrine of the Annihilationists proceeds on the definition that eternal life is eternal existence ; Christ, on the other hand, said, "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

This is written to the only lady to whom a letter is addressed.

In the last two short letters of John we find the application of the wonderful, heavenly, Divine, and eternal principles laid down and developed in his Gospel and First Epistle Hospitality and beneficence in individual responsibility are restrained or fashioned on these principles in Scripture, and it is remarkable that it is an instruction to her not to be hospitable for the truth's sake, and also for love's sake (ver. 6), all the more that hospitality belongs peculiarly to the ladies' department of the household arrangements. But should the interests of friendship or family stand

in the way of obedience to Christ, we know which must give way.

THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

This is the converse of the former, and shows whom we are to receive and help in their work. A Christian should have principle regulating every detail of conduct. In the first letter we are shown whom not to receive to our board of hospitality: those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ as fully shown in the first letter; those who deny Jesus Christ as come in the flesh. It is remarkable how often the word "truth" appears in these two short letters, evidently showing that no revelation of Divine love sweeps away Divine truth. Brethren and strangers cast out by the proud and presumptuous, if of God, are to be received by us because received and owned of God.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

As a rule the prophets of the Old Testament wrote concerning the Jewish nation in whole or part. Jonah is an exception, and is taken up with the Gentile Nineveh. The New Testament letters are, as a rule, written to Christians. This letter by James is an exception. It is addressed "To the twelve tribes scattered abroad." Hence we have in it exhortations given to true Christians, to unsaved professors talking about faith, and to ungodly Pharisaic rich men. While Luther in his early days was so absorbed in studying and unravelling the receiving aspect of faith, he failed to see the acting aspect, and hence called this precious letter "a book of straw." He lived to see that James was right and Martin Luther wrong. We have in James

The Activities of Faith.

James was the brother of our Lord (though in beautiful humility calling himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"),

and our Lord claims kinship with those who manifest the activities of faith in doing the will of His Father (Matt. xii. 49).

Chap. i. *The trial and support of faith.* Our faith is *tried* in order that we may have patience. Often we cannot understand why this trial is permitted. Ask wisdom of God, but believe that it will be given. This trial, when endured, receives a crown of life. But this trial by external circumstances must be carefully distinguished from the internal temptations of lustful flesh which are to be mortified.

Our faith is *supported* by a knowledge of the Word of truth. We heard the Word and were born again. We receive the implanted Word by being in a moral state to receive it. We are doers of the Word by looking into the perfect law of liberty—the will of God, the joyous rule of the free man's conduct. This doing of the Word curbs the tongue, and leads us to visit those that the flesh can profit least by, and instead of gossiping with man's words, keeps us unspotted from the world.

Chap. ii. *The activities of faith in works.* The works of the flesh would be taken up with what was great in the world's eyes and despise that which is poor; but this is inconsistent with the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, for God has chosen the poor.

Moreover, the royal law was thus broken, and the law of the freedom of the new nature not developed. They failed to manifest the mercy of God to this world in practical acts. Faith in the doctrines of Christianity can never save. Devils have this kind of faith. Divine faith is active faith. The whole argument is about a man *saying* to a fellow-man he has faith. His fellow rightly says, *Show* me it. God alone can see faith. We can see faith only by works. But note also, while dead faith is condemned, legal working is also excluded. The two examples of works of faith derive *all* their value from the faith in God which they manifested. Abraham's work, apart from faith in obedience to God, would have been the murder of a son. Rahab's work, apart from faith in God, would have been base treachery

—cutting thus at the root of the fundamental relations of men on the earth, the family and the nation.

Chap. iii. *The activities of faith in words.* In the public teachings in the congregation of God the tongue has to be watched; because, if unbridled, our public talk will come back upon us with tenfold condemnation. A word spoken in private has equally to be watched by the activities of faith; for, though the tongue may seem little, it can do much. A bit, a helm, a fire, a fountain, etc., are all used as illustrations. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, and "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good *conversation* his works with meekness of wisdom," as contrasted with all the opposites natural to the flesh. But we come still more closely in to the man himself. From deeds and words we come to the spring of all the internal desire and will.

Hence we find in chap. iv. *the activities of faith in thought.* Man by nature covets, envies, lusts as to fellow-man, and even in prayer to God is in friendship with the world. The remedy is, He giveth more grace; see vers. 6–10—most beautiful and perfect.

We are as to our *brother* not to be his judge, nor to speak evil of him.

As to *God*, we are to put our wills under His, even as regards to-morrow's work.

As to our work, we are not to consult our own wills, but to do the good before us.

Chap. v. sums up all by giving the relation of *the activities of faith, and the coming of the Lord.* That is the great crisis to try all. The ungodly, haughty, rich, who had no faith but in their money, would find nothing but weeping and howling. The treasures heaped up for the last days were of no avail. They would stand guilty of the murder of Jesus Christ, the Just One.

But to the possessor of living, acting faith, this coming of the Lord is of the greatest importance.

We are to learn patience in all things.

As to *brethren*, those above them were not to be grudged, as the Judge was at the door. They were not to employ solemn oaths in everyday transactions. Joy and sorrow were to be both entered into by the Christian. The relation to the elders of the Church in cases of discipline-sickness are laid down. Mutual unburdening of heart, as contrasted with confessions to officials, are mentioned, and then for the weak and the erring, the activity of faith is to go out and seek till it saves.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.

There are three writers in the New Testament who are connected with the Jews—the writer to the Hebrews, James, and Peter.

The writer to the Hebrews writes not only to converted Jews, but to those who had made a profession, but were in danger of falling back to Judaism (chap. vi.); James writes to the twelve tribes; Peter to the converted but scattered Israelites, strangers among their own people, and liable to defilement by contact with Gentiles.

The writer to the Hebrews shows the setting aside of the old by the new dispensation; James shows the activity of faith as contrasted with legalism or licence; Peter enforces what of truth, responsibility, or privilege is common to old and new.

Peter was peculiarly fitted thus to write being the apostle to the circumcision, who, having found out his own weakness, was specially commissioned to strengthen his brethren. These two are the strengthening

letters. The first was for a time of suffering —therefore the girdle and the furnace are required. The second was for a time of corruption—therefore the lamp is required.

Suffering is mentioned sixteen times in the first letter; and we have the trial of our faith precious, the blood precious, and the living stones precious. Our provision for a time of suffering is, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (i. 13). Our joy even is found in suffering. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." The power of the crown lifts up the weight of the cross.

Chap. i. to ii. 3. The trial of faith.

Chap. ii. 4 to iii. 9. Trial in the details of life.

Chap. iii. 10 to iv. 11. Trial on account of our righteousness,

Chap. iv. 12–19. Trial as Christians for His name's sake by the will of God.

Chap. v. Trial from the presence of Satan.

Much precious teaching will be found under each of these divisions. Papists and even some very badly taught Protestants have tried to find a sort of purgatory in this passage about the "spirits in prison" (chap. iii. 19). It never says Christ went to prison to preach, but that Christ's Spirit preached to spirits who are now characterised as imprisoned. That is to say, Noah while building the ark, having the Spirit of Christ, preached to the antediluvians, but they would not repent. But far from this being the end of them, they were now kept in prison waiting for the great judgment day. Nothing could more harmonise with Peter's teaching concerning our trial for righteousness. The righteous Noah had to stand much more. A Jew might laugh at his converted brother, and say what a contemptible minority. Peter puts the argument into the converted man's mouth—"We are not such a minority as Noah was in."

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.

"Strengthen thy brethren," was the commission given specially to Peter. His first letter gives strength against external evil; his second provides strength against internal evil, corruption, and seduction (i. 4, ii. 12–19). Enemies were met in the first; darkness is met in the second, by the lamp of the truth (i. 19). We had, in the first letter, "trial of faith," "blood," and "stones," as being precious; in the second we have "precious faith" (i. 1), and "precious promises" (i. 4),—promises given by God, and faith to apprehend, enjoy, and use them in the midst of darkness. Through the first we had much about suffering; through the second we have much about knowledge; "Through the knowledge of God" (i. 2); "Knowledge of Him that hath called us" (3); "Add to virtue knowledge" (5); "Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (8); "Know these things, and be established in the present truth" (12); "Knowing that no prophecy is of any private interpretation"

(20); "Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour" (ii. 20); "Known the way of righteousness" (21); "Knowing that there shall come scoffers" (iii. 3); "Know these things before" (17); "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord" (18).

The Apostle is anxious also to put them in remembrance of what they had known. "Put you always in remembrance of these things" (i. 12); "Stir you up by putting you in remembrance" (13); "After my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (15); "Stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (iii. 1). Promises, faith, knowledge, remembrance, are essential in times of corruption.

Chap. i. The divinely-provided security against corruption. In the securities given to us against days of corruption we have exhortations as fitted for the journey (vers. 1 to 11), and then our eyes are lifted up to the bright glory that is the end of the path.

For the journey, ver. 3 tells us, that Divine power is on our side, and "His

Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," ending with this assurance in verse 10, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." We are shown very plainly that the Divine life is one of constant watchfulness, activity, and growth. We have here that well-known sum in the arithmetic of the Divine life—a practical exercise in addition. The foundation, and first of all, is faith : the topstone is love, thus—

LOVE.
BROTHERLY KINDNESS.
GODLINESS.
PATIENCE.
TEMPERANCE.
KNOWLEDGE.
VIRTUE.
FAITH.

We need not say how Divine this arrangement is. People may believe, but they will make little progress unless they have added to their faith virtue. The use of this word is very appropriate. Among warlike nations it signified warlike prowess. In the Christian

use of it, it includes all that goes to make up manliness and moral courage in the individual self-government of the believer. Moral courage is to be added to our faith, so that we may practically keep the flesh under and surmount all opposition in the Divine life, living in the energy of the Spirit. Without this there can be no communion and no progress. Without this, knowledge will puff up, but having this we add knowledge and intelligence as to all things revealed. Temperance is added to our knowledge, by which we are able to put a rein upon all our desires; and knowing our own weakness, we are prepared to be patient with others, so patience is added. To these are added godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

For the end of the journey, we are exhorted to have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by following the exhortations suited to the journey.

Who could have more earnestly told us about the dangers of the way than Peter?

Who could have told us more clearly about the glory than he who had a glimpse of it on the Transfiguration Mount? as told us at the end of this chapter, which is Peter's explanation of that expression of Christ's in Matt. xvi. 28, and Mark ix. 1, and Luke ix. 27, "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." In all passages where this occurs it goes on to say, that after this Christ took Peter, James, and John, and showed them the short glimpse of the glory in His transfiguration. Here Peter tells us that "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus" was shown to them on the holy mount. And of course this confirmed the Old Testament prophecy about His glory. "We have the prophetic word made sure," is a closer translation of verse 19. Here was Christ rejected, and the prophets said He was to have glory. "Yes," said Peter, "so it shall be, for we saw it;" and their sight corroborated the prophets' words, and no prophecy is to be taken by itself as man's words, but to be looked upon as a part of a whole, all giving

the mind of the Holy Ghost. With such Divine safeguards for the journey and its close, we are now prepared to look into

Chap. ii., and see the history and development of corruption. The fallen angels, the sinners of the flood, and the ungodly of Sodom and Gomorrah, are given as illustrations of apostasy and judgment. False prophets and teachers would come in and pervert the whole of Christianity, and live in unbridled lust, disowning the Lordship of Christ, talking about Christianity as being in it, and yet denying His authority. Not only did they despise His authority, but all other authority. It is a sign of the last days "despising government."

The flesh abhors government—Divine or human—whereas obedience is the very essence of the new nature. The end of all is that they show at last what they are; that they had never been born again; had never possessed the new nature; had only been externally touched by Christianity, and were no better than well-washed pigs.

Chap. iii. stirs up the pure minds of Chris-

tians by way of remembrance. Do we not all need stirring up and frequent stirring up?

They are told of materialistic scoffers who ignore the fact of the flood and preach the continuity of matter. Peter points them onward to the end of all things, when all material things shall be dissolved. This is the judgment at the end of the day of the Lord. Jude gives us the judgment at its beginning, but a day with Him is as a thousand years. But it is important to remember that both are "*in the which*," though a thousand years may roll between. The sum of the whole to us is: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

Peter's second letter gave us the Divine security in days of sin and unrighteousness. In Jude we have the course, character, and end of

Apostasy.

This is not merely wickedness, but a departure from God, and making grace a servant of sin. Paul, in Rom. vi., shows the Christian's horror at the thought of sinning that grace may abound. Jude shows the ungodly professor's course in so sinning.

1. *The introduction.* He is the servant of Jesus Christ when others were denying His authority. He addresses those who are sanctified and preserved amid the apostasy, and writes of mercy as to each individual, and peace and love among all the faithful. He had purposed to write of the salvation which was common to all Christians, but found it necessary to change his theme, and exhorts them to "contend earnestly for the faith

which was once delivered unto the saints" in presence of apostasy—and he proceeds to show us—

2. The *character* of this apostasy. Ungodly men had crept in unawares, and (*a*) turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and (*b*) denied the authority of God in Christ. The word here translated Lord is master (δεσπότης). He then gives us—

3. *Illustrations*—in (*a*) salvation. A people saved in an earthly way from Egypt apostatised, and were destroyed.

(*b*) Creation. Angelic beings apostatised, and are kept for judgment.

(*c*) Nature. The dwellers in Sodom and Gomorrah apostatised from what was of nature, and are everlasting examples. Peter's illustrations in 2 Pet. ii. are parallel but contrasted. Salvation was for Noah, but the ungodly perished. Angels sinned (nothing about apostatising), and are reserved for judgment. Sodom and Gomorrah are condemned as an example to the ungodly.

4. *The course of the apostasy.* They are "dreamers," for they know not the truth, and

they gratify the flesh, and despise, not only Divine, but all kinds of authority. In contrast to God's ministers, who would not even speak evil of the devil, but handed him solemnly to the Lord's rebuke. They do not know government, hence speak evil of it. They know only what is beastly, and degrade themselves to it. The course is graphically described, referring to Old Testament characters, as—

The way of Cain.

The error of Balaam.

The gainsaying of Core.

Here we have the opposition of nature as seen in Cain, of false religion as seen in Balaam, who taught what he knew to be false for money, the open apostasy of Korah against God's represented authority and priesthood. Such apostates among them are then described as they now exist. Sunken rocks in their feasts of love—altogether apostate, and waiting only for the blackness of darkness for ever.

5. *The judgment* on the apostasy is when the Lord comes with all His saints—as

Enoch prophesied. The ungodliness of sinners before the flood, with only conscience to guide them, was swept away as to its presence by the flood. This ungodliness has not disappeared as regards humanity under the full blaze of the perfected revelation of God and under the reign of His richest grace, and, moreover, will go on, for even after *all* the saints, having been caught up before, shall come with the Lord, it is to execute judgment on them who murmur against all authority, wallow in lust, and give honour to men in order to get money.

6. *Warnings and exhortations.* Remember what you have been told, that the reign of grace would manifest this apostasy. Building up in faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keeping in the Love of God, saving those who had been drawn into the apostasy, they would be looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. For it is only by His mercy that any of us are kept from the snares of this apostasy.

7. *The Commendation.* We are commended to Him—not Who pardons and

restores, but Who, amid all this apostasy, is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

This is the book of the throne—the book of judgment. The Church is seen in patience, and her foes in power. Before the close of the book we see Christ acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords; Satan bound for a thousand years, and finally cast into the lake of fire. Between the rejection of the King as now, and His reigning, the vials of judgment are poured upon this earth, which are the tribulation spoken of in Matthew's Gospel and by Daniel the prophet—"There shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time" (Matt. xxiv. 21).

It is the revelation or panorama of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to show unto His *servants*—things which must shortly come to pass. The saints of God are not regarded in this book as sons, or according to sonship, but as servants, or according to service; nor is God called *our* Father. We are addressed as servants, and as such are associated with those perfect servants, the

angels, who rejoice to do the will of God. There is very much in this book of angelic and diabolic ministry, corresponding in many ways with the Old Testament.

The name Almighty, which was revealed to Abraham, is used eight times, in the following passages—chap. i. 8; iv. 8; xi. 17; xv. 3; xvi. 7, 14; xix. 15; xxi. 22. It is only used once in the New Testament before this, in 2 Cor. vi. 18.

"His Father" is used twice, in chap. i. 6; xiv. i. "My Father" three times, in chap. ii. 27; iii. 5; iii. 21; He is not spoken of as *our* Father.

The title "Lamb" is only used in this book. The Greek word meaning "little Lamb" is mentioned twenty-six times—chap. v. 6, 8, 12, 13; vi. 1, 16; vii. 9, 10, 14, 17; xii. 11; xiii. 8; xiv. 1, 4, 10; xv. 3; xvii. 14; xix. 9; xxi. 9, 14, 22, 23, 27; xxii. 1, 3.

John's name is not mentioned in his Gospel or Epistles; it is often mentioned in this book.

The first three verses give us the introduction proper.

The second verse contains two parts of the

record—(1) The prophetic word, (2) and the testimony of Jesus Christ of all things that He saw. This is the only book in the Bible which has such a blessing attached to it, as we read of in the third verse—

1. Blessed is he that readeth.
2. Blessed are they that hear.
3. Blessed are they that keep the sayings, regulate their lives by them.

The blessing to those who keep the sayings, is repeated at the end of the book (chap. xxii. 7). "The time is short, or at hand;" it is like rolling up a bale of cotton; it is just finished; God's hand is on the last piece, just to be turned over.

We are in noble company in studying the subject of this book. Enoch was the first who preached a sermon on it in antediluvian days: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all." Daniel, the dearly beloved, wrote about it in prophetic days; in evangelical New Testament days it was John who lay on His bosom, who is chosen to convey to us the judgment truth.

Prophecy is too practical for many.

1. The scoffer says, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

2. The wicked servant says, "My Lord delayeth His coming."

3. The wise virgins sleep upon the subject.

Which company are we in?

The address and salutation of the grand catholic epistle to the seven Churches we have in the fourth verse. The salutation is so markedly different from that of the epistles going before, showing the great principles of the book. Instead of Father, it is "Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come;' "The Seven Spirits," showing diversity of power and operation; "The Son," the faithful witness.

For four thousand years the truth taught was the unity of Deity—"Hear, O Israel, God is one." Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the great idea of this dispensation. Christ revealed God the Father in a threefold manifestation, showing different aspects and phases of the one God. We see here a wonderful revolution in the change of name,

also the displacing of the names of Son and Spirit, the Spirit coming before the Son—"Him Who is, Who was, and Who is to come." The self-existent, the past Being, the coming One, constantly Being, no time in which He *was* not, no time in which He *is* not, the New Testament revelation of the Old Testament Jehovah. In the days of Joshua, when He was known as the Jehovah God, they were commanded to slay men, women, and children. Some dispute His authority to do so in the olden time, and so they dispute and disbelieve His coming judgment. Now the drag is on His chariot wheels, but "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Seven Spirits showing the magnitude and manifold character of the work in filling all down here in testimony for God.

The Son Jesus Christ as the Servant Who has got the Revelation.

The threefold character of Jesus Christ in the fifth verse is a commentary on the name of the Father.

1. Faithful witness. He *was*.

2. First-begotten of the dead. He *is.*
3. Prince of the kings of the earth. *Is to come.*

The faithful witness contrasted with all careless witnesses.

The first-begotten from the dead. That which is supposititious in eternity made patent in time. My past is not bounded by protoplasm, but by the grave of the first-begotten from the dead. He is risen, and He would have been in the grave yet if sin had not been put away.

He is to come as the Prince of the kings of the earth. He is to come and reign, and put down all rule. The coming One is the meaning of this book. He is coming to show how this world can be governed—"A King *shall* reign in righteousness."

John stops the revelation at this point and bursts into praise: "Unto Him that *loveth* us"—it should be loveth, a continuous present, not something in the past, but day by day it continues. In verse 6 we have the ascription of praise by the Church, a parenthesis of a song in the midst of the judgment. We

can say, "We fear not, we know He loves us."

The salutation is received in three ways—

1. By the Church (who know Him as the first-begotten of the dead), there is a joyful shout unto Him that loveth us, etc.

2. They who did not receive Him, the only faithful Witness, but pierced Him, shall mourn.

3. All kindreds of the earth, who are yet to know Him as their Prince, shall wail because of Him.

What is the condition of the world when Christ comes back again? "All kindreds of the earth shall *wail* because of Him" (Matt. xxiv. 30).

The last time they saw Him, it was as a malefactor; He has never been seen by any unsaved man since then. The next time the world sees Him, it will be as their Judge.

In the future day the Jews are to look and mourn (Zech. xii. 10), which is the beginning of their return to the Lord, coming back to the place in which they will be the faithful witnesses for God upon the earth.

"I AM Alpha and Omega" is used four times in this book (i. 8; ii. 8; xxi. 6; xxii. 13).

It is more than likely that John wrote the Revelation in Patmos, where he was banished by Domitian, who was a very wicked emperor. It is the last authoritative writing from God, so it is very befitting that He should take this name, "Omega." Everything can be written between the two letters A and Z, so with this title, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, it includes all. You may write grief, or joy, or prosperity, they are all found between A and Z, and to know God as the A and Z of our experience we are happy.

"The beginning and the ending." This has to do with time. He is the beginning and ending of all that has been done or written, of all inspiration, of all dispensations. Go back with your geology to millions of years, He is the beginning; all that is seen in geology is only medals to the Creator's glory.

"Almighty" is the Abrahamic name;

everything that was promised to Abraham is to be fulfilled in this book. He is God over all the earth, and will yet assert His right as Creator and King of the earth.

While John was in the lonely isle of Patmos, because of his faithful proclamation of the Word, there was a voice came preparing him for what he was to see. Vers. 12 to 17 give us the things which John saw and was told to write.

Seven golden candlesticks should be lampstands.

1. Gold—representing the perfection of Divine righteousness.

2. Light—responsibility to shed light all around.

3. The Son of man among the Churches, taking cognisance of all their actions. We here see the Son of man as the great and glorious One inhabiting eternity, identified with the Ancient of Days of Daniel's prophecy.

We see His personal glories in the thirteenth verse. One like unto man's heir, who has reclaimed all that man has lost. He

is arrayed in the priestly ephod, not, as in John xiii., girded for service. He is girded with no towel of service, but in His robe of dignified priestly judgment.

"Golden girdle"—showing Divine perfection and consistency of His ways.

"Head and hairs white"—a sign of wisdom and discretion. His head is bare. He has laid aside the mitre. He is coming to judge, not to intercede. No crown yet. Soon many crowns will be on His head, when seen as the Son of man, Who is to right all that man has wronged.

"Eyes as a flame of fire"—going right through one, all-perceiving, penetrating, judging.

"Feet like unto fine brass"—a remarkable expression; more truly, white-hot copper, no defilement, no departing from judgment, fit to burn up everything.

"His voice"—beyond man's power to restrain.

"Out of His mouth a two-edged sword"—power to inflict judgment when grace is neglected, judicial power.

When John, who lay on His bosom and knew Him so well, saw Him as the Son of Man in the glory, the sight was so awe-inspiring that the beloved one fell at His feet as dead. It is interesting to note the different attitudes in which John describes himself, his feeling harmonising with the different aspects. "He wept" (v. 4). "He wondered" (xvii. 5). "Fell at the feet of the angel" (xix. 10). "Fell down to worship" (xxii. 8).

Just at the time when John was overwhelmed at the sight of His glory He laid His right hand upon him—a resurrection touch, saying, "Fear not." He comes with His all-assuring word to give John confidence before He gives him the revelation of His mind suited to the Churches.

How lovely these "Fear nots" come spangling down the whole banner of the Bible! The first was to Father Abraham when he refused the riches of conquest. This is one of the last given to His faithful servant John, as he lay stricken with an overwhelming sense of His greatness. Christ

came to raise him up as the One Who had died, calling Himself by the Old Testament title used in Isa. xli. 4, xlviii. 12: "I am the First and the Last," the absolute One Who had entered into the place of death, and was now alive for evermore.

The disciple in such a position gets the injunction, "Write:"—

1. The things which thou hast seen, viz., the Son of man in the glory;

2. Things which are, viz., the second and third chapters;

3. The things which shall be after these, viz., from the fourth chapter to the end of the book.

The nineteenth verse is the key to the whole book.

The Revelation supplements and fulfils the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament.

Mark how they coincide. When Daniel saw the vision he says, "There remained no strength in me"—a similar condition to that of John's: "A hand touched me. He said unto me, Fear not, Daniel." But there was more in John's resurrection—"Fear not."

He was prepared to see fulfilled all that Daniel had prophesied. Very wonderful it is to see the Old Testament so parallel to the New. We read, "O Daniel, greatly beloved," and we know John was the apostle of love. It requires one to be in communion to be able to receive either a revelation of grace or of judgment. How suited John was to receive this revelation! The burden of his Gospel is, God has been here. He sat on the same stone with an outcast sinner; He, the Son of God, the Son of man, Who is to be the Judge of all the earth, a real man. In his Epistle he shows that now are we sons of God; no love or light seen but in us, now princes in disguise. Christ, the Son of God in this world seen in the Gospel of John; the children of God seen in the Epistle of John.

In Revelation we see God and His own taking judgment on those who have rejected the grace and truth that John wrote of. John was thus prepared for all the conditions that were brought before him. From the revelation of the Son of man Himself he was calm to see the wrath of the Lamb.

From the seventeenth verse to the end of the chapter we have—

1. What He *did:* laid His right hand upon him. John never trembled after this, He did not fall at His feet as dead again. He could not have stood all that He saw unless he had got the resurrection hand laid on him. The laying of the hand on one meant identification.

2. What He *said:* "Fear not," etc.

3. What He *is:* the Living One. He that hath life in Himself, that does not need to get life from any one, but has it, and can communicate it to others.

4. What He *became:* He became dead of His own voluntary will, but He has conquered it and is alive. He now can transfer that life to us as the One Who has conquered death.

Take the illustration of a rainbow turned upside down, and you have the path of the Living One. At the apex we see Him on this earth dead. He is raised, and we are raised up together with Him, with that communicated life which is to the ages of ages.

5. What He *has:* He has the keys of Hades, the unseen state of the soul, and of death, which has to do with the body. If you tremble at the physical fear of death and Hades, remember He Who has gone through death has the keys.

6. What He *commands:* "Write"—it should have "therefore" after it—"write therefore," because I am the First and the Last, and the Living One for evermore, and have the keys.

7. What He *explains:* The mystery of the stars, which are the angels; and the lampstands, which are the Churches. God is His own interpreter, and will make all mysteries plain.

The symbols are explained by what John heard; faith is above sight. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

"The Church in Ephesus."

The angel or messenger was one in responsibility who was blamed and commended.

Notice three questions and their respective answers.

I. What is it that is said to be written to the Churches?

1. A *revelation*, the mind of God;

2. A *prophecy* of what was to be found to the end of Church history;

3. A *mystery*, lessons mysteriously given for us all.

II. Who writes?

1. *I* in the midst of the Churches.

(1) *Christ.* (2) The *Spirit.* (3) Sent and signified by *John.*

III. To whom written?

1. The *Churches;*

2. The *Angel;*

3. *Anybody* that has an ear to hear.

Let us remember three things.

1. The revelation of God's mind given to us;

2. The inspiration of God's messenger;

3. The communication to us, which is made by the same Spirit which revealed and inspired.

That which is given from God Himself to John is a revelation, and inspiration indites John to give that revelation. The same

Spirit makes that inspiration a communication to me.

The method or manner of this revelation.

1. In all these epistles the first thing brought before us is Christ in a character adapted to each individual Church. How varied these are.

2. A testimony given to each Church in its general aspect.

3. An admonition founded on that general statement.

4. Special statements of trial.

5. A promise given to encourage the faithful.

6. A promise put in the long run to him that overcometh.

7. Universal invitation to share in the blessing to all who have ears to hear. Such is the general method.

The Son of Man is standing in the midst, to see how we are witnessing for Him.

The address to the Churches is all in direct language, not reported speech. "I know *thy* works."

Notice the different titles of the Person Who addresses them.

1. "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand" (ii. 1).

2. The first and the last, Who was dead and is alive" (ii. 8).

3. "He that hath the sharp sword with two edges" (ii. 12).

4. "The Son of God, Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass" (ii. 18).

5. "He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (iii. 1).

6. "He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David," etc. (iii. 7).

7. "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (iii. 14).

There is not one the same as another. His address to each of them is in two parts —testimony or address, and admonition.

Ephesian testimony in the second and third verses, the admonition in the fourth verse, and founded on these a promise in the seventh verse. The promise of blessing is to the overcomers. From the time of John's day to the end of Church history we have to

fight the good fight of faith. The overcomers graduate, go from step to step.

1. Ephesus goes back to Eden, to "the tree of life."

2. Smyrna, the second death, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

3. Pergamos, hidden manna, as in the desert.

4. Thyatira, power over the nations, as in the land, better than the power of David and Solomon.

5. Sardis, clothed as priests.

6. Philadelphia, a pillar in the temple.

7. Laodicea, the throne, not paradise lost but regained, seated on the throne of God.

Ephesus refers principally to apostolic times; it is the only Church in which apostles are mentioned. Sad to think that the "nevertheless I have somewhat against thee" came in in apostolic days.

What the Lord Jesus Christ saw in the one Church, the Spirit asks all the Churches to hear and learn from. Their activity, endurance, and discipline were all according

to His mind. After bringing up all the good He knows about them, He finds fault in a very kindly way. Apostolic faith, failures, and declension are seen at Ephesus. How many things he approves in Ephesus, (1) work; (2) labour, keeping at it; (3) patience or bearingness; (4) faithfulness, canst not bear them which are evil; (5) discipline, trying those who said they were apostles; (6) loyalty for My name's sake; (7) righteous anger; a sevenfold recommendation, a compound pleasing to the eye of the great Master.

The only thing found fault with is *love;* communion was awanting. The declension of the Church full of gifts was "left the first love." This blotted the whole Ephesian work. Let us see that our eye and heart are right, then the hand will be guided aright. The Ephesian trial was activity *versus* communion. The word to them is repent, come back; repent, do, and shine; do not have your lampstand removed.

Future reward, the tree of life. The first thing that man lost is the first thing the

Church is promised by faithfulness and overcoming.

The Church in Smyrna.

They were a poor Church. They had works, tribulation, poverty, activity, suffering; (but thou art rich)—an interjection giving their condition—in poverty they were rich; there is something better than gold: real riches, rich in good works.

Special encouragement is given to this suffering Church. "Fear none of those things." The devil was to cast them into prison, but God limits the time of trial. Time is measured when it is connected with doing or suffering in prophetic language. The prophetical place of Smyrna is that of the martyrdoms of the second, third, and fourth centuries. The edict of Milan finished the sea of martyrdom. Ten persecutors lived during that time: the Emperors Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Adrian, Severus, Maximinus, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, Diocletian.

The reward is the crown of life: it is special for peculiar service. Special rewards

have a special function in the economy of God. Judgment is always for works.

There are six crowns mentioned in Scripture. The crown of gold, which all believers get, He bought it by the crown of thorns which He wore; the crown of righteousness, for all who love His appearing; the crown of life, a special reward when life was risked, which is the martyr's crown (Jas. i. 12); the incorruptible crown (1 Cor. ix. 25); the crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. ii. 19; Phil. iv. 1); the crown of glory (1 Peter v. 4).

There is no blame laid to the charge of this Church.

The Church in Pergamos.

This is the Epistle of the Sword. Always in this book we see a sword used with regard to judgment either of His own truth or of His throne. He commends before He finds fault.

Fornication and adultery connected with these things that are established, are used in a peculiar way in Revelation. Here it is seen in the very germ of Church history, an

unholy alliance requiring the two-edged sword. This began in the days of Constantine. Satan dwelt and reigned, as seen in the history, from the fourth to the seventh centuries, patronising ages of the state trying to elevate the world. Satan is "the prince of this world" to govern it (John xiv. 30). Also "the god of this world" to be worshipped by it (2 Cor. iv. 4).

We have to live and act as if we were outside of Satan's dwelling. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was in Pergamos, which was worse than the deeds which were in Ephesus. People may make a slip and repent of it, but to adopt a doctrine is much worse. It was evidently a doctrine that led to bad deeds.

The reward is the hidden manna, individual secret communion; and the white stone, quiet conscious approval to each overcomer.

The Church in Thyatira.

We see here the rise, progress, and continuance of Roman Catholicism as illustrated

by Jezebel. In the Old Testament she was the worst woman we read of. The first mention of Thyatira is in connection with Lydia. She got her living by working in purple (Acts xvi. 14); and in Rev. xvii. 4 we read of the woman Babylon or Rome arrayed in purple. This is the longest epistle, and covers the longest period; we know its beginning, but not its end. The first mention of "Till I come" is in this epistle. Jezebel will continue until He comes. It is a most likely thing that the remnant of Thyatira through persecution had emigrated to the valleys of Rome, and had been driven at a later date to the fastnesses of the mountains, and were really the forefathers of the Waldensians.

In the title Christ uses to this Church, of "Son of God," we see power to give life and execute judgment (John v. 21, 22). Up to this time reformation was looked upon as possible for the Churches. This is the beginning of protesting and dissenting.

We see Satan walking about in the Churches aswell as the Son of man. He is the most

powerful and most intelligent created being, and his power is aimed against Christ. The reward includes two things,—

1. Authority over the nations. The same thing as is predicated of the Son of man in the second Psalm.

2. I will give Him the Morning Star. The morning star comes before the sun: you require to be watching very early to see it. The Church will see Christ as the Morning Star before the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing to the Jewish nation.

The Church in Sardis.

We have less historical knowledge of this Church than any of the other Churches. In all, the leaven of evil is indicated, and has to be watched and guarded against. They are given as samples of what would be to the end.

Notice the co-equality of the seven Spirits in this address, and it is He that possesses, and is the origin of, these seven Spirits; He Who has the administrative power to come and judge the world. Whatever the failure

may be in the Church, He has all the power, the seven stars in His hand showing the authority. No approval given here, dead orthodoxy. The memory is brought back in the third verse to the grace *received* and the Word of God which they had *heard.*

In 1 Thess. v. 2, 3, we read of the Lord coming as a thief to the world; so to the Church at Sardis He says, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." The mistake is in having a name merely that thou livest. The punishment is to have the name blotted out of the book of life. The reward is having the name confessed.

He that overcometh shall be clothed in "*white* raiment." "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." This seems to be something acquired rather than imputed. It is in Revelation that we get the entire mention of "white raiment."

1. The overcomers in the Church in Sardis to be clothed in *white* raiment (iii. 4).

2. "Buy of Me *white* raiment, that thou mayest be clothed" (iii. 18). It seems to

imply moral fitness, moral righteousness to walk out-and-out for God in the midst of lukewarmness.

3. "The elders clothed in *white* raiment" (iv. 4). Thus morally capacitated for the work given them to do.

4. "*White* robes were given them." Given to saints crying for vengeance. Does it not seem to be God's present approval of their righteousness? though not answering yet their cry for vengeance, How long?

5. "Clothed with *white* robes," godly Gentiles (vii. 9, 13, 14).

6. "The wife of the Lamb is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (R.V. xix. 8). This is strongly in favour of it being moral as contrasted with imputed righteousness, because it is said "His wife hath made herself ready" (of course by grace), still it seems to be moral adaptation to her nuptial place.

7. The armies in judgment, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, similar to the former mention.

The Church in Philadelphia.

This is one of the brightest of the Churches, and more faithful than the former one. The description of our Lord here given throws us back on the moral glories of His person. They are commended for three things: 1 A little strength; 2. Kept His word; 3. Not denied His name; Their little strength made them look to God and depend on Him. The keeping of the word was the cause of their faithfulness to Christ, in not denying His name; keeping the word of His patience, patiently waiting for Him: therefore I will keep you *from* the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world. He is seated; seeing all that is going on in opposition to Himself, yet He is at peace. This same peace of God garrisons our heart and mind in the midst of all, while we hear Him say, "Behold, I come quickly." A crown is promised to the faithful ones.

Our little strength becomes a pillar in the temple, to go no more out. The overcomer has written upon him—

1. The name of My God.
2. The name of the city of My God.
3. My new name.

The Church in Laodicea.

Laodicea is said to have suffered from an earthquake in Nero's day. They were very proud and rich, and would have no help. This is the last Church mentioned, and the name our Lord takes is "the Amen." Isa. xii. 9 gives an explanation of "the Amen." In the Hebrew it is like this, "If ye will not amen, surely ye shall not be amened;" if you do not plant your foot upon the promises confirming them, you shall not derive the benefit from them. In Him all the promises are Yea and Amen. Whatever may fail, He seals up the Church's history with "I am the Amen," the end of it all. See the course which leads up to this climax. He is faithful, He will leave nothing out, He is true, exact in all He says, complete in faithfulness, exact in truth.

The end of Christendom is to be spued out of His mouth, and why? Because they

thought they were rich and had need of nothing; they did not know their own poverty. "I counsel thee to buy;" to get as a right, gold and white raiment—gold which is intrinsically valuable, Divine righteousness which stands the fire; white raiment, a conscience void of offence; be righteous men, and known as such in everyday life. "Eye-salve," that you may see where you are, and what you are. This is the highest attainment to the overcoming one, even to sit with Me on *My* throne. Which promise we see fulfilled in the fourth verse of the twentieth chapter, "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The Seven Churches.

The promises to those that overcome in the Seven Churches, restore dignities and blessings to man which he had lost since Eden, in the order, too, in which he had lost them; all because Jesus, the *perfect Man*, had title to everything on the ground of what He Himself was. As such we share all with Him, because one with Him in death

and resurrection. In this way all has been earned or won for us, while grace untold promises each to an *overcomer.* Each is a blood-bought yet a free reward.

1. (ii. 7.) THE TREE OF LIFE was forfeited by Adam, and with it Eden's paradise; but the promise to the Church of Ephesus is "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

2. (ii. 11.) THE SECOND DEATH was incurred when Adam fell, but "he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" is promised to the Church in Smyrna. This was especially to Smyrna, where there were martyrs.

3. (ii. 17.) THE HIDDEN MANNA. We are now brought into the wilderness, and the manna that Israel despised and loathed (not understanding it) is here promised to the faithful ones—God's own hidden manna. An omerful was laid up in the golden pot kept before the Lord.

4. (ii. 26.) POWER OVER THE NATIONS stands in contrast to the Book of Judges,

where we read that they did not drive out the nations (i. 27 ; ii. 5) : " They that hated them ruled over them." Now all this is reversed in Him Who will rule all with a rod of iron—" even as I *received* of My Father." Suffering here, as in Smyrna, is associated with reigning : " If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

5. (iii. 5.) THE WHITE RAIMENT—clean linen, the righteousness of the sainted priests —in contrast to the defilement and complete failure of the priesthood in 1 Sam. ii., iii. 13. White garments will be given suited to the companionship of the true Levites cleansed for the service of the Lord (Num. viii.).

6. A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD. The temple and the city, which the enemy had again and again ruined and defiled, are restored to Philadelphia in a way becoming Him Whose love is as great as His power, and neither knows measure nor end.

7. TO SIT WITH ME ON MY THRONE. This is the perfection of all. Every other vessel had but witnessed to its own inability to bear the glory—even David and Solomon, the

brightest among them—but all serve only to set off the perfection of the Man after God's own heart, for "He shall build the temple," "He shall bear the glory," "He shall be a priest upon His throne," "the root and offspring of David," "the bright and morning star."

III. Division.

THINGS WHICH MUST BE HEREAFTER.

We now come to those things which are to follow Church history. We have no mention of Churches after this, except in the last chapter, where the whole book is commended to the careful attention of the Churches for their warning and edification and encouragement (ver. 16).

John's place is now changed. He no longer sees and hears visions and voices *on the earth*, but "a door is opened in heaven," thus inviting the seer to look within. It was not as in John i. and Rev. xix., where heaven itself was opened to allow God's messengers to issue forth; but it was a

"door" simply, to allow the Apostle to see what was going on in the presence of God.

The deck of a ship, from the topmast-head, presents a very different appearance from standing on the deck. So, in order to understand what follows, we must go with John in spirit and see what is within the opened door.

Jehovah's throne is seen in heaven—the throne of *creation*,—and it is *set*. He is seated in peace. His throne is so fixed that He looks on in silence at all man's doings until His word be fulfilled: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come Whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. xxi. 27). *One* sat—the God of creation—and as such a halo of mystery was round about Him. He Who made the covenant with Noah about creation was seen with the rainbow, the creation symbol, round about the throne, representing grace, peace, covenant.

All His titles are used in the eighth verse:—

"Holy, holy, holy" = moral, essential

nature. "Lord, God, Almighty" = creation and history. "Was, is, and is to come" = prophetic unity. Then in verses 9 and 10 He is worshipped as "Him that liveth for ever and ever;" and in the eleventh verse He is adored as the origin and end of all created things—the Monarch of the universe.

Precious stones are not used in Scripture for adorning, but for illustrating attributes of God. In the revelation of God to Moses there was seen a paved work of sapphire stone under His feet (Exod. xxiv. 10). In Ezekiel's vision we see the sapphire stone representing the same glorious indescribable One. The jasper is generally understood to be the diamond, representing God in all His perfection, purity, and holiness. The sardine stone has a red hue, symbolising glory and judgment. John saw twenty-four seats or thrones, and on the thrones four-and-twenty elders. The term "elder" is of ancient origin. We read of "elders" first in Exod. xviii., and in Heb. xi. 2. The term designates godly men from Abel downwards, thus classing it with the most general of descrip-

tive titles. Throughout the Old and New Testaments the elders are representative officials; and here we believe they represent the Church and the Old Testament saints seated on thrones in glory.

John saw those redeemed ones in heaven, enthroned, and crowned, and robed in white, before a single vial of woe is seen on earth. "The sea of glass" recalls the laver in the tabernacle, and the molten sea in the temple. The water is the Word, that which washed us here: we shall there stand upon it for ever. Four living creatures or beings, full of eyes, seeing into eternity, showing perfect discernment to see through all people, all times, all worlds. These living creatures, probably representing attributes of Deity, are evidently identical with the "cherubim" at "the east of the garden of Eden," and the antitypes of the cherubim shadowing the mercy seat in the temple. In Ezekiel's vision they had wings and wheels—the wheels being for the earth; while here, being in heaven, they are seen with wings only. They are described as living creatures: the lion, the head of wild

animals; the calf or ox, the head of the useful or domestic animals; a man, intelligence; and an eagle, swiftness, piercing right up to the sun, the abode of light. We see in these the principles of action, not the agents. The One on the throne was attended by these remarkable phenomenas. "Six wings," showing velocity of action in doing the will of Him they worship. "Eyes within," "before," "behind," universal discernment or knowledge. The elders are seen in active worship; they are never perturbed amongst all that is around them. Sin is gone; therefore, they have joy and calmness in His presence.

In the fifth chapter we see the throne of *redemption*, and He Who is on the throne is revealed to us as having a hand, indicating a Being, not an abstraction, as the diamond and sardine of the former chapter, but some One that has a hand, and in that right hand there is a book. It was a roll sealed with seven seals, showing perfection; it was written on both sides, showing plentiful revelation and plenitude of deliverance. A

book or roll is especially valuable in this chapter. He has not left us to gaze and wonder—He has given a revelation right down from Himself. An angel asks the question, "Who is worthy to break this seal and see what is written?" When God's judgments begin, no created being is able to expound them.

The angel did not know anything about it; but an elder, a sinner saved by grace, knew who was able to open the book. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah," not the "Head of the Church," as in Ephesians, or "Son of man," as in the Gospels, not "Son of David," but the "Root of David," hath *prevailed* to open the book. This word prevailed is the same as overcoming. It is used in the New Testament twenty-four times by John, *i.e.*, once in his Gospel, seven times in his first Epistle, sixteen times in this Revelation, and once by Luke, and twice by Paul.

The Lord Jesus Christ does not open the seal in His own right as Revealer—He has overcome as One Who was made sin for us;

as a man in the place of a sinner He has prevailed.

The One that opens this roll is the *Lion* and the *Root*. When David and his followers are a failure, the Root is there in all its power to glorify God, and Israel will be saved under Him. Both of these titles have reference to the earth; He is the Lion of the royal tribe of Judah descended from Abraham. He must be seen as the centre in studying this book. In the sealed book we see revelation—the revelation of the counsels of God as to the earth; in the Lion we see power; in the Root all is resuscitated that had been lost. We can neither open, look upon, nor interpret the book from a human point of view, but only as we take our stand by the side of Him Who prevailed.

John made a closer discovery: in the midst stood a Lamb clothed with perfection of power. What a combination is here—Lion and Lamb. The word used means a "little lamb," and is seen with seven horns and seven eyes, which is Hebrew imagery combining the idea of power, perfection of

strength, and discernment of wisdom. When God is to take His power and reign, what is more needed than this, "I know what to do, and I can do it," it is perfect government. It is the Lamb slain as governing that is seen in this chapter. The book He takes in His hand consists of the seven seals, which are opened in the following chapters. When the Lamb has taken the book, He touches a chord that thrills through all creation. In verses 8 to 13 there are four different circles seen, of those in sympathy with the Lamb—

1. Four living creatures;
2. Twenty-four elders (v. 8);
3. Many angels (v. 11);
4. Every creature (v. 13).

The saints whose prayers are presented before the Lamb are evidently those living on the earth at that time. He never leaves Himself without a witness. The elders *sing*, "Thou art worthy," because He has redeemed a number of saints then on the earth; "they," not we "shall reign on the earth."

The angels *say*, "Worthy is the Lamb"

We sing a *new* song, "Thou art worthy," without mentioning His name. Redemption tells of a new song (Psalm xl.),—not the creation song which the angels sang, and we read of in Job xxxviii. 6, 7. Its corner-stone was creature goodness (Gen. i. 31). That stone is smashed. God brings in a new thing, namely, redemption and resurrection. This book specially tells us of four things—(1) evil, (2) conflict, (3) victory, (4) the kingdom—all of which are settled, reconciled, or conquered by the blood, the victory of the Lamb.

Angels can speak in the abstract of His worth. Our very sins and weakness give us a higher knowledge of His great and glorious worth as the Lamb.

There is no mention of the Lord God Almighty in this chapter—it is the slain Lamb—thus revealing to us that all the judgment must be executed in the light of the Cross. There is one word throughout the book translated either as, or as it were, or like. There are forty-four mentions of it. They are found in chaps. i. 10, 14 twice, 15, 16; ii. 18; iv. 1, 7; v. 6; vi. 1, 12 twice, 13,

14; viii. 8; 10; ix. 2, 3, 5, 7 twice, 8 twice, 9 twice; x. 1 twice; xiii. 2, 3, 11; xiv. 2, 3; xv. 2; xvi. 3, 15; xviii. 21; xix. 6 thrice, 12; xxi. 2, 11, 21; xxii. 1.

These are as a key given to the panoramic vision.

Another expression we have twenty-one times, translated likeness or resemblance—i. 13, 15; ii. 18; iv. 3 twice, 6, 7 twice; ix. 7 twice, 10, 19; xi. 1; xiii. 2, 4, 11; xiv. 14; xvi. 13; xviii. 18; xxi. 11, 18.

The following eight expressions or figures are explained—

1. Golden vials full of odours: the prayers of saints (v. 8).

2. Two olive-trees: two witnesses (xi. 3, 4).

3. Great dragon: the devil (xii. 9; xx. 2).

4. Seven heads: seven mountains (xvii. 9).

5. Ten horns: ten kings (xvii. 12).

6. Waters: peoples and multitudes (xvii. 15).

7. Woman: that great city (xvii. 18).

8. Linen: righteousness of saints (xix. 8).

In the sixth chapter we notice how repeatedly John tells us what he *saw*, not what has literally to happen. In Isa. lvi. we read of "the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." When our Lord read this passage in the synagogue He closed the book after "the acceptable year of the Lord." That year has lasted over eighteen hundred years. He opens the book where He shut it when He breaks the first seal and commences "the day of vengeance" (vi. 1). Daniel was told to seal the book until the time of the end; here we see it opened, and the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, and the great tribulation mentioned in Matt. xxiv., executed on the earth. "The day of the Lord" prophesied of by Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Habakkuk Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. xxx. 7). "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and

bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. xxvii. 6). The prophecy and dates of the Bible have to do with the history of the world.

Since the rejection of the Messiah by Israel the time between "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that are to follow" is an interval of grace, in which the Gospel is preached to the whole world. After this day of grace follows the day of judgment, in which will be seen God's mind with regard to His exercising His authority upon this earth, the vindication of God in His own creation, the Lamb that was slain, seen, and acknowledged to be worthy of the worship of all round about Him.

From the breaking of the first seal there is no more grace, no "still small voice," but the noise of thunder.

John is telling us what he *saw*, not what was literally to happen.

The Lord of Hosts that we read of in Zechariah is to marshal His army, and we find a chaos dark as midnight in the following judgments—

War.
Famine.
Death.
Earthquake.
Sun black.
Moon red.
Stars falling.
Heaven departing.
Mountains moved.
Hail and fire.
Darkness.
Locusts.
Bloodshed.
Lightnings and thunderings.

The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

In the midst of the seals God shows us who are to be His witnesses upon the earth. He lets us know that He still has a witness after the Church is seen in heaven.

God's witnesses are—

In law, Israel.
In grace, the Church.
In judgment, both Jew and Gentile.

May the one hundred and forty-four

thousand sealed Jews (Rev. vii. 4) not be the brethren spoken of in Matt. xxv. 40? The Gentile witness is seen as a great multitude who have come out of great tribulation. They stand *before* the throne and say, "Salvation to our God, Who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." This is the Gentile ascription of praise.

The visions in this book appear to come to a climax. As we see in the eleventh chapter, before the woes are finished we get a glimpse of the rightful King being acknowledged, and the elders are seen worshipping God and saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy *great power* and *hast reigned.*"

In the following chapters we are taken back, as it were, to what historically happens before this time, while along with this we have the "vials" of chaps. xv. and xvi., and the doom of "Babylon the Great" (xvii. and xviii.) carrying us forward to the closing days of the "power" of the beast (xvii. 12-14), and to the appearing in glory of the Son of man.

Then, in the nineteenth chapter, we see Him Who is called "Faithful and True" coming out of heaven, followed by His armies, to execute judgment on the beast (ver. 20) and scatter all opposing forces. Is this not the fulfilment of the prophecy of Enoch referred to by Jude (14, 15): "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all"? After the judgments, which are said to be "true and righteous," we see Satan bound, and Christ, the King of kings, reigning with His own for a thousand years, after which the rest of the dead are raised and judged at the "great white throne."

The first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter give us a glimpse of the eternal state, in which God shall be all in all in the new heaven and the new earth. We are thus run on, in the visions of the prophet, to the finality of God with men.

The Book of Revelation is a final setting of all previous prophecy, as fulfilled in connection with the glorified Christ. And hence, just as before (chapter nineteen), we

saw the trumpets, woes, and vials going on to a historic end, and then returning to traverse the same ground, but all moving towards Christ's advent, so here, in chapters nineteen and twenty, up to the eighth verse of the twenty-first chapter, we have a sequence of events beginning with Christ appearing and ending with the final separation of the righteous and the wicked, in the second life and the "second death"—the "tabernacle of God" and the "lake of fire."

And thereafter we are taken back again, in the passage of the ninth verse of the twenty-first chapter up to the fifth verse of the twenty-second chapter, to see the heavenly bride adorned for her husband and manifested in regal power as the source of government. Hence the city is the millennial city, the holy Jerusalem, bearing the glory of God and flashing with its jasper splendour, gleaming gold, and light Divine. The nations of the millennial earth are seen walking in the light of the city (xxi. 24), and owning it as the source of government (ver. 26).

In the sixth verse of the twenty-second

chapter we meet the same words as in the first verse in the book: "The things which must shortly be done." "Behold, I come quickly." "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you *these things in the Churches.*"

May we have the opened ear to hear His testimony and His last words, "*Surely I come quickly.*"

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